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BY

H. HARCOURT HORN
Author of "Handbook of Law for Women"

"I SUMMON UP REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST"
SHAKESPEARE

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The Christopher Publishing House
Boston, U. S. A.

AN ENGLISH COLONY IN IOWA

BY

H. HARCOURT HORN

Author of "Handbook of Love for Women"

"I SUMMON UP REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST"

The Christopher Publishing House
Boston, U. S. A.

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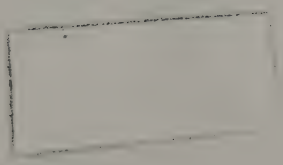
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY DEAR, DEAR WIFE.



FOREWORD

A preface in a book of this kind seems to be unnecessary. It has been determined to let the last paragraph in the work perform the double duty of a preface and a finale.

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An English Colony In Iowa

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE

"Whither bound, gentle shepherd, with that immensity of luggage?" greeted my ears as I stood on the platform of the Lime Street station at Liverpool, collecting my belongings. Turning round, there was my old friend J. whom I had not seen since we were quartered together at Portsmouth. "I go to the land of the setting sun, to the erstwhile haunt of the Ojibway and the Dakota," I answered laughingly, and you? "To the east, to the land of the Pharoahs, the Sphinx and the fellaheen. Rotten luck!" We chatted a while, shook hands and parted, never to meet again this side of the Great Divide. Meanwhile the driver of the growler, four-wheeler, cab, or whatever you may call it, was loading it inside and out, with my contraptions, leaving a space into which he hoped I could squeeze myself. "Pretty good load," I said, nodding toward a lean but by no means bad looking animal between the shafts. "Ah, sure, he'll just enjoy it, 'twill be only a divarsion for him," at the same time truculently brandishing a well worn whip with a flourish which betokened a bad time for the former should there be a difference of opinion between drawer and drawee.

So we trundled along over the heavily stoned pavement until we reached the landing place, and my luggage being disposed of, cabby was next in order, when I was rewarded, by "Good luck to your honor, shure 'tis the jintlemen ye are." I confess to a slight enlargement of the uvula, as I realized

that I was about to leave Old England for a country I had never seen, and of which I knew little or nothing.

* * * *

A pleasant afternoon it was when in the latter part of September, 1868, I stepped on board the tender which was to carry us out to the Cunarder Samaria lying at anchor on the Mersey, with steam up ready for her trip to Boston. The Company had a fine fleet, this was one of their smaller boats, about 2500 tons. Their crack vessels were the paddlewheel Scotia and the screw steamer Russia. The latter was noted for her beautiful lines, she had a record of eight days and a few minutes from New York to Queenstown. Even these were but pigmies, compared with the liners of the present day. However the Samaria was staunch and well manned, and it was the proud though unheralded boast of the company that it had never lost a passenger, a record that I believe was maintained until the war.

All the Atlantic liners at that time, including the Inman, Guion, National and others, carried sails as an auxiliary. They added much to the beauty of the vessels, while the trimming, furling and unfurling of them made an interesting sight. They also served to steady the boats. Some carried three, and even four masts, ours had but two. They were square-rigged, with mainsails, jibs and topsails, much after the manner of the coasting freighters on this side. The different lines were distinguishable by the color of their funnels, those of the Cunarders being painted red, surmounted by a black ring.

When the passengers and the luggage had been transferred to the Samaria the capstan was manned, chains rattled through the hawseholes, then as soon as the anchor was safely stowed away the captain gave the word, and off we started for Queenstown to call for the mails which came out on a tender, bringing also a few cabin and many steerage passengers. Sad indeed were their partings as the tender cast off

from our vessel, and the real journey commenced. Irrepressible by some was their grief, giving vent to their feelings with loud lamentations, while by others their sorrow was more or less subdued; but a distressing sight it was, especially to see the women with their shawls over their heads, as they waved their last adieux. The Green Isle presented the gorgeous panorama so often described, so let it suffice to say that it never could have looked more beautiful than it did on that day.

The ship had a full complement of passengers, and I found that I was to share my cabin with another voyager, which instead of being a source of annoyance, turned out to be one of infinite pleasure. I took to my room quite early that night, appropriating the lower berth, by reason of priority of possession, consequently I did not meet my companion to be. In the morning I was awakened by "Will you take a cup of coffee?" I supposed it was one of the stewards, but to my surprise encountered the winning smile of an elderly gentleman clad in a multicolored dressing gown. He held in his hand a steaming cup of coffee, which from its fragrance was evidently the output of no novice, but that of a genuine expert. The taste did not belie the odor, the first sip showed that I was right. No doubt the surroundings enhanced the flavor. None of your villainous essence, laden with chicory, tasting and smelling like an apothecary's shop, but a brew such as is seldom found on the other side of the pond.

Why is it that over there, not only in England but in France, they persist in mingling that abominable, coarse, bitter root with the coffee? I opine it is from some peculiar motives of economy with which John Bull seems to be permeated in certain directions. Take the matter of coal, one of his pet idiosyncrasies. Generous to a degree, your host will produce the best of his cellar at dinner, but a fire in your bedroom is seldom vouchsafed, save perhaps the first night of your visit; thrice happy is he to whom the luxury is extended beyond that time. Pardon the digression. I expressed

my surprise and my thanks for the gift so totally unexpected. "Well," he said, "I have crossed the ocean nearer fifty than forty times, and I never travel without my paraphernalia," pointing to a percolator and a spirit lamp. I apologized to him for having taken the lower berth. "That is all right, first come first served," came the reply. I insisted that he occupy the lower berth in the future, it was some time before I could persuade him to do so.

Another surprise was in store. After these appliances had been carefully stowed away, with the exception of the spirit lamp, on which a cup of water was put to boil, shaving apparatus was produced, my friend sat on his trunk and calmly proceeded to shave without a looking glass. This was too much for my curiosity. It seemed to be a decidedly hazardous proceeding, as the ship was rolling heavily, so I ventured a remark to that effect. "Oh, no," said he, "I have been over the ground so often that I know my way perfectly," and to my relief the job was finished without mishap.

After dressing, he filled the cup again with cold water, and turning to go, said, "There will be some hot water for you, please blow out the lamp, I will wait on deck and we can have breakfast together if agreeable to you." Of course, I was only too delighted to have such pleasant company, so later on I joined him and we had our first meal together. The steward came up and said, "Mr. A. I have reserved seats for you and this other gentleman at the captain's table, you know him very well, he sends his compliments, and will meet you at dinner." After breakfast we strolled about the deck, he telling me of some of his adventures, as he had evidently been a great traveller.

Later on he asked me if I ever played cribbage, and on my answering in the affirmative, he said, "I am very glad to hear it, it is the only game I play, but mind," he added, "no stakes, no money between gentlemen." We played constantly, for he explained, "I like cribbage because you can play and talk at the same time." On an occasion much to be remembered, I

held the 29 hand, which as all cribbage players know, can only by made by holding three fives and a knave, and then turning up the other five which must correspond in suit to the knave in the hand, making a combination extremely unlikely to occur. He was astonished and said it was most extraordinary, that he had played the game for many years, and had never seen it done before. I said I was just as much surprised as he was, that I had known it was possible, but had never seen or heard of it being made. He laughed and said, "Well, you are extremely lucky, I trust that fortune will continue to smile on you through life."

He told me he lived in Boston, but spent considerable of his time in travelling, at first with his wife, but now she preferred to stay at home with her children and grandchildren with a great many of which she was blessed. He asked me to his house, but I explained that I should be in Boston but one night, and would not trespass on his hospitality.

The voyage was uneventful, I saw but little of the other passengers, save a handsome white-haired couple who hailed from Savannah, Georgia. She was still a very beautiful woman, evidently much younger than he, but it was the husband on whom my attention was centred. He wore a huge wide-brimmed hat, a Panama, the like of which I had never beheld. The finest weave possible, truly a wonderful chapeau. He had been engaged in handling merchandise brought in by blockade runners, and as he said, he had made his pile.

I asked him if he had ever met Captain H., a friend of mine in England, who had run the blockade successfully many times, in fact, he had published a book entitled "Never Caught." He said he had, and gave a graphic and accurate description of him, so we had something in common to talk about. He gave lurid recitals, not only to me, but to a number of listeners who gathered about him, of the "running," as he called it, but he added, it was the other fellow who had all the fun.

He told us of the narrowest escape Captain H. ever had, when he was hailed by a Federal steamer who loomed up suddenly out of a fog, and ordered him to stop. He did so, and when the steamer sent a boat to take possession, Captain H. called down the pipe from the bridge "Full speed ahead," and before the northern, or the Yankee boat as he termed it, recovered from her surprise, the "runner" was lost in the fog. He chuckled with delight as he ornamented his yarn with sundry expressions new to me in his pleasant southern drawl.

He was a generous patron of the bar, his capacity seemed to be unlimited, and he thanked his good star frequently that he had what he denominated a powerful thirst. Surely a genial, jovial fellow. When he expatiated on his outwitting the Yankees, it was all in good humor, no one took umbrage at it, but, on the contrary, all hands joined in the general laughter at his sallies. His wife was a great favorite among the passengers, both male and female, but she was very discreet, and always referred to her husband as a merchant.

As already stated, the vessel carried sails, and the officers took pains to keep the watch busily engaged in trimming them, in painting here and there, or in polishing the brass work. It is a rule of the sea never to allow the watch to be idle. When the main sheet was being hauled, the chaunter, as he was called, would start a ditty, such as "It doesn't take long to knock a man down," or some such words, in which the men joined heartily, sometimes interrupted by the voice of the mate urging speed in no uncertain tones.

There was the usual array of bread and butter misses and callow youths mooning about the deck in couples, everlastingly raving about the sea, the clouds, the waves, the setting sun, and like novel subjects; but as a rule, the crowd did not seem to be especially interesting, or perhaps I was not sufficiently intellectual. Making friends with the Chief Engineer, I was rewarded by a visit to the "innards" of the ship, and shown the shining engines, beautiful in their rhythmical

motion. A glimpse at the stokehole was good and plenty, as the boys say.

On Sunday the Captain read the Episcopal service, and what the singing lacked in quality was fully atoned for in vigor. Each one seemed to be imbued with the idea that his or her voice was to be the ruling star, so the result was decidedly spotty. The lady at the harmonium, however, knew her business, did her very best to cover the deficiencies, struggling bravely to bring about some semblance of harmony. The Captain was a good singer and sang bass with a will, attempting to keep the rest in tune; but it was too much for him, he could not stem the tide, and at last gave it up in despair. A Methodist minister was very anxious to improve the occasion, but the congregation preferring the air on deck, thought they could get along without further spiritual guidance, and so another opportunity of consigning sinners to everlasting perdition was wasted.

There was rather a disturbing incident connected with the service. The steerage passengers were invited to attend the service, and some of them turned up. Among them was a young woman very neatly dressed, leading her little boy decked in his best bib and tucker, a dear little fellow. As the ship was rolling considerably, the little chap slipped and fell on the wet deck, and his nice white dress was sadly soiled. Some beast among the cabin passengers laughed loudly, whereupon the woman burst into tears and started to turn back, but two or three of us rushed down the companion way and steered them safely into the harbor of the main cabin.

After a run of some twelve days we reached Boston, and a very pleasant prospect it was. My friend and I passed through the Customs with no trouble, but loud were the laments and protestations among some of the females when requested to pay duty. The men took the matter more philosophically, and opened up their purse strings with little objection, the more experienced knowing full well that an appeal would be a mere waste of time and energy.

CHAPTER II

THE JOURNEY WEST

My stay in Boston was limited to one day, punctuated by the remembrance of a benevolent old broker, at least he looked so to me until I found out that his benevolence was limited to home consumption, for he short-changed me shockingly in the matter of turning a few sovereigns into currency. In the evening I heard Charles Dickens read the trial of Bardell v. Pickwick, very well received, while he met with quite an ovation. A few seats ahead of me I saw my old cribbage friend with a party, all of whom seemed to be enjoying themselves, evidently celebrating his return. Naturally, I did not make myself known.

I had but a hurried view of the fine old city, which reminded me much of London, with its narrow crooked streets, but was most favorably impressed by the want of the abject poverty, beggars and mendicants which seem inseparable from the latter place. I had read of the hustle and bustle supposed to exist in all American cities. It certainly was not so in Boston. On the contrary, there was a quiet dignity and an air of repose decidedly refreshing. Courtesy abounded, and a kindliness of spirit seemed to pervade the atmosphere.

I did, however, meet with an incident which was wholly unexpected. Turning into a narrow street in the less fashionable part of the town, I saw what many, many people never have seen and never will see. I heard a peculiar droning sound, which seemed somewhat familiar. Looking up, there stood a little man, with a dark olive complexion, surrounded by a crowd of children singing and dancing to his music. He was dressed in a rather faded Swiss costume, turned up hat, with the inevitable feather therein. I saw at once that he was

from a far more southern country than his makeup seemed to show. He held in his hands the very last instrument I should have expected to have seen; it was nothing more or less than a true hurdy-gurdy, and while with one hand he turned the wheel, with the other he pressed down the strings, producing that extraordinary sound which can be elicited from that instrument alone.

It was shaped somewhat like a violin, but with a large bowl in the head in which rested a wheel, on top of it being tightly strung four strings. The instrument was suspended from his shoulder by a cord, and when the wheel was turned with one hand the strings were manipulated with the other until they touched the wheel. He played with no small amount of skill, sometimes singing an accompaniment. I spoke to him, and he answered in the soft gurgling tone of the Italian. "Where is the monkey?" I asked. He shook his head, "No monkey, too cold, he die. I take care of him but he die, poor monkey." He said he always played in the small streets where he could see the children dance. "No wife, no children," he said.

I once possessed a monkey, and though he was good natured, he was too disturbing for ease of mind. He closed his career in a flash of glory. Sitting in my room I heard an unusual thumping sound outside, and on opening the door there stood Master Jocko with one of his front paws in a bottle of Day & Martin's blacking. He had clenched his fist which acted as a stopper, and he refused to loosen it, while he stamped around with his foot in the bottle. So I put him up by the fire, sitting on the fender with his feet resting on the tongs and shovel, a favorite position of his. Then I gave him a copious dose of gin, which he demolished, threw the glass in the fire and patted and rubbed himself all over with joy. Soon he succumbed to the heat and the spirit and fell asleep.

I sent for my servant; we spread newspapers on the floor, took the monkey off his perch and laid him on the papers. Then we broke the jar with a hammer. He jumped up, picked up the blacking, fortunately it was nearly dry, licked each

piece of broken pottery, licked off the papers, and finally sat up. He was the most ridiculous figure that ever was seen. He had smeared himself all over with the blacking, until he looked like a chimney sweep. In about ten days I received a large envelope with a letter from the Secretary of the London Zoological Society, which is still in my scrapbook, thanking me for the gift of a Bonnet Monkey.

That night I took the train to Chicago where I made the acquaintance of an old lady who was dealing in real estate, and according to her account, very successfully. She wanted me to go in with her as a partner, and offered to show me her books, declaring that in five years we would be rich. To me the game appeared too elusive, not one for an amateur to dabble in, so I declined the dazzling proposition.

But in avoiding Scylla I nearly fell into Charybdis in the shape of a confidence man, who, by his account knew my people in England; unconsciously he tripped, for when I mentioned a little village he mistook it for the name of some friends, and exclaimed with great gusto, "Oh, don't talk to me about those boys," and thus gave the game away. So, realizing that fortune is fickle and unstable, I fled to Madison, Wisconsin, going over the Chicago & Northwestern road, and there changed to a train on the Milwaukee & St. Paul line, which at that time had not entered Chicago, but had its terminus in the former city.

Speaking of Milwaukee, that city of good-natured Germans and far famed beer, a man who had not feasted on ham and eggs at the Plankington House, certainly missed one of the epicurean joys of life. Plankington was a pork packer there, and the very choicest hams, cured by a secret process, were set apart for his hotel alone. Then, nothing but the very best cuts of each ham were ever sent to the table, and with eggs fresh from the farm formed a dish at which the mouth of Lucullus would have watered.

Breakfasting there one morning I met Emory Storrs, a famous Chicago lawyer, and over such a dish he exclaimed, "Yes,

it is delicious, it is almost heavenly, there is a consolation about it that one fails to get from religion." I laughed, and "Are you hungry?" I asked. "Well, I should think so, hungry as a bear. I've not eaten a thing since yesterday, and tomorrow will be the third day."

The Milwaukee road took us to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, giving me my first view of the mighty Mississippi river, though at that point the water itself is not much over a mile in width. Then after lingering over breakfast at the Williams House, oh, such waffles and honey, none of your twenty minutes for refreshment, but a generous half hour, a ferry carried passengers and baggage to the Iowa side of the river, near a town called North McGregor, now Marquette, where, by the way, there was a hotel whose landlord was known all over the country as an incorrigible practical joker, with a flow of profanity the like of which few have ever equalled. He wore an old fashioned beaver hat, with closely clipped fur. It was indeed the apple of his eye, and he took immeasurable pride in the same. One day a drummer nailed the hat down to the office counter, the owner being up town. It was only when he went to the railroad station, or to the landing to meet a river steamer, or on some high day or holiday, that this headgear rested on his cranium. After a while the whistle of a steamer blew, the old Colonel, as he was called, rushed into the office, snatched up the hat in a hurry, and it came away, leaving the top nailed to the counter. Nobody ever had the hardihood to repeat the torrential volley that ensued. He was pointed out to me as we left the ferry as one of the sights of the town.

The train consisting of a baggage and express car, smoker, day coach and ladies' coach, was waiting for us, and we started on our journey towards St. Paul, drawn by a locomotive gorgeous in paint, with a lavish display of bands, like a chetodon, only in brass, with a bell, the whistle and all the oil and grease cups of the same metal, shined up to the *n*th. It was a wood burner, with a huge spark arrester on the smoke stack, resembling an enormous mushroom; certainly a very simple af-

fair compared with the giants of the present day, but it got there all the same. The engineer wore no overalls, as there was no grime or soot from the cinders which rattled like hail on the roofs of the cars when the wind was dead ahead. At night a constant stream of sparks outlined the passage of the train.

The roadbed was not fenced, hence a cowcatcher was an absolute necessity, and it has remained as such up to the present day, though in a modified form. Cattle frequently strayed upon the track, until scared off by the toot, toot, toot of the whistle, sometimes tarrying too long, with disastrous results. I remember seeing an unhappy cow hobbling along with a broken leg after an unsuccessful encounter with the cowcatcher. It reminded me of what George Stephenson said, when testifying before a committee. He was asked what would happen if a cow should stray on the track and be struck by a locomotive; his reply was that it would be varra awkward for the coo.

The cars were heated, and it might truthfully be said superheated, by stoves, the filling of them with wood tending to relieve the brakemen of the monotony of the journey, their time being divided between that, setting the brakes, calling the names of the stations, lighting the lamps, and loading the tender with wood. The conductor and brakemen wore no uniforms or badges of any kind, but were not gentlemen of leisure by any means.

Tickets were not generally purchased at stations, in fact were not purchasable at some of them, but fares were paid on the train, which involved a constant reference to the schedule of rates. Trip passes were quite numerous. They encouraged travel, which in its turn eventually brought freight, so they were not a dead loss to the company. By the same token, be it remembered that no one ever saw a pass good for freight. Annual passes were rare, mostly confined to officials of the road or other lines.

There used to be a good deal of jocularity as to how much of the receipts ultimately reached the company, but though

doubtless there was some "knocking down," as it was termed, most of the conductors were fair to the company, and too proud to steal. The officials were alert, and soon discovered when the receipts were not satisfactory, or not up to par, and now and then a new face would appear. Such removals, however, were rare. Sometimes, by way of a hint, a conductor, or "con" as he was called, would be laid off a day or two, but, with very few exceptions, they were loyal supporters of the road.

Every few miles there would be a stop, and the fireman and the brakemen turned in to load up the tender with wood, a task at which some of the passengers not infrequently assisted. The wood was cut in two-foot lengths, piled up along the road at certain spots, and marked with red paint after it had been inspected and measured.

Of course, there were no air brakes, but on approaching a station a long whistle would be sounded, whereupon the brakemen would rush to the platforms of the cars and apply the brakes by hand until the train was stopped. There was also an emergency brake on each car, which upon a cord being pulled, set all the brakes at once, being actuated by a powerful spring which was kept wound up. This, however, was never used, except in case of extreme emergency, as the shock they said was terrific. I never experienced an application of it, but was informd that the passengers would be thrown forward with extreme violence, the results at times being truly appalling. Sleeping cars were run on the night trains, but the Milwaukee road, as it was called out west, the St. Paul in the east, built its own sleepers in its shops, and operated them for many years.

So we jogged along for some 60 miles at about 25 miles an hour, until we reached a little station called Ridgeway, where I alighted, and found a Concord coach waiting to take its load of passengers to the town of Decorah, some six or seven miles further east, which was my final destination. The travel was over a beaten track, at times on the

open prairie, again through spots more or less timbered, varied now and then by passage over little bridges spanning a small tortuous stream. Our jehu was a pleasant fellow, the horses good, the trip both a pleasure and a novelty. The driver and I got along very nicely, he telling of the country, while the passengers talked business. After a run of an hour or so we reached the little town.

There I received a most hearty welcome from a Captain A., who like myself, had worn Her Majesty's scarlet, an ineffaceable bond of union. So after mutual inquiries as to family matters we naturally sacrificed to the god of geniality, and after a modest quencher, as Mr. Dick Swiveller would have expressed it, started to make arrangements for my abiding place. Captain A. was sorry that he could not put me up, but he had only bachelor's quarters, and was careful to have no spare bed, otherwise as he remarked, he would be inundated with callers from the country, and, as he said, he was not running a hotel. I asked what callers, and he answered that he referred to those duffers on farms who were always coming into town.

It appeared that there was quite an English colony there, some living in the town, others on farms scattered over the country roundabout. Most of us had imbibed the Englishman's lust for land, and were crazy to own it in some form or another. Generally, this appetite was appeased by the purchase of farms, which, erroneously enough, were supposed to be a mine of everlasting joy accompanied by fabulous returns.

This was not without foundation with wheat at two dollars a bushel, and other grains and produce in proportion, but when the inevitable drop came hopes transformed themselves into depressing facts. As the returns diminished the glamor wore off, and soon we awakened to a painful realization that our imagination had run away with our judgment, and that we were left with nothing but a piece of land from which nothing could be extracted save by the hardest of work and the most rigid

economy, neither of which had been included in our proposed bill of fare.

But I have gotten ahead of my story. Looking around, we soon found a most comfortable boarding house kept by an agreeable and kindly widow, whose husband had been killed in the late unpleasantness. Later on I found myself seated at table with ten or a dozen boarders, and met with a hearty welcome. It happened that I was seated next to a very prim elderly party, who I supposed was a minister of some denomination, but to my surprise turned out to be a skipper who had been in the whaling business with headquarters at New Bedford, or Marblehead, and had retired. He asked me about my passage, and as I related the incident of meeting the Savannah merchant, he remarked "Do-tell-I-want-to-know." Fearful that I had not made myself understood, I was about to repeat some of the details, when a lady sitting opposite to me, raised her eyebrows in a rather significant manner; so seeing that I was treading on dangerous ground, though not knowing why, I proceeded with my story, and found that at each fresh incident the same language was repeated by my listener. After dinner the lady laughingly told me that this was a very common New England expression, and was intended to convey the idea that the person uttering it was interested in the subject.

There was also a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion, who on the next Sunday inveigled me into his store, and tried his best to persuade me to buy him out, or, at least, to go into partnership with him. But, like the deaf adder, I was proof against the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Another of the party seemed to be rather antagonistic to the British, for he informed me that he had just read the account of the execution of Charles the Second, and had never read of a more bloodthirsty deed. I asked him if he didn't consider that the execution of Nell Gwyn, one of the wives of Henry the Eighth, was not more shocking. He was not quite sure, but perhaps it was so. It was all the company could do to

keep from laughing outright, and there seemed to be an unusual demand for pocket handkerchiefs.

Contrary to what I had understood was the usual practice of talking but little at meals, the conversation was highly enjoyable, and many a good story and much entertaining talk enlivened the table. Among others, there was a school teacher, or a schoolmarm so called in the rural districts, who was possessed of a high sense of humor. She was then teaching in town, but previously had been assigned to a country school. Full of anecdotes, she related them with a true relish for the ridiculous; some of the answers from the scholars would vie with those in "English as She is Spoke."

One evening, she said she dropped in at a revival held by some colored folk, when one of the congregation most earnestly beseeched the Lord to "anint him with the Ile of Patmos." She also dabbled in poetry, not of a very high order, she explained. Some of it was printed in a local paper, and I take these from my scrapbook:

Mystery

His country called, he fought and lived.
Once more he strove, across his face a mist,
A painless touch, the dart of death.
And then a ray of light from angels' wings
Flashed in his troubled eyes. 'Twas but a dream.

Winter

Poor frozen, little bird with head drooped under wing,
Benumbed with bitter cold and winter's icy sting,
On death's approach you plucked the snowflakes from your breast
Awaiting the last summons to carry you to rest.

After dinner Captain A. called round for me, we meandered

round the town and entered some of the stores. The quantity and class of goods displayed was astonishing. The best is none too good for us, they explained, and showed us round with great complacency. The store keepers were keen, bright and up to date. It takes a man of parts to run a store like these successfully. They received us with great cordiality, exhibited their wares, but made no attempt to persuade us to buy. They know full well that we were only on a visit of exploration. The number of farmers' wagons on the street demonstrated the need for such an accumulation as we had seen.

Right pleasant was the total absence of obsequiousness and flattery, accompanied by the eternal, and I might say infernal, washing of the hands with invisible soap, by which the English, and worse still the Irish shopkeeper, is wont to express his gratitude for your patronage.

North of the town there was a large number of well to do families, and while some of them were Quakers, many of the younger set did not take kindly to the dress of their elders, and branched out into more cheerful habiliments. It was evident that the town was the general rendezvous for the surrounding country, notwithstanding the fact that there were towns near-by with railroad facilities. I was told that many of the farmers who on that account got a little less for their produce than they would at these other towns, preferred to come here, claiming that they were better treated by the storekeepers, and had a greater variety of goods to choose from.

We branched out on the subject of the English colony, which at that time numbered probably not more than twenty-five or thirty, some of whom I met that day, and one and all seemed well pleased with their surroundings and the outlook. Halcyon days, indeed, were they. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, for them, the future was a sealed book.

CHAPTER III

TWO RETURN

So after scouring round the country more or less, I bought a farm, three or four miles from Decorah, well timbered, with a comfortable amount of rich bottom land, stocked it with the necessary animals and implements, remaining there until the late winter of 1869, when I returned to the old country, and was married in the Cathedral at Armagh, Ireland, a place which revels in two such edifices, one being the Roman Catholic.

Later my wife and I set sail on the Cunarder Cuba, a vessel not quite as large as the Samaria, about 2300 tons, with three masts. We had an extraordinarily smooth, though uneventful voyage, there being but few passengers at that season of the year. Some young Englishmen were on board, so we whiled the time away part of it with whist, and part with recounting incidents at home and abroad, one or two of them having traveled rather extensively. A middle aged man told me in confidence that he was on board because his uncle who had always called and treated him as his heir, suddenly and clandestinely married his housekeeper. I was a little skeptical, as the situation is not novel, but he added that his uncle had behaved pretty decently to him, so the story looked more plausible. Most of them were younger sons, setting out in life with the hope of being independent, and reaping prosperity in the future. There was not one scalawag among the lot, so far as I could judge.

Among our fellow voyagers was one poor woman, to whom her husband was most assiduously attentive, pressing her to eat this and that; plaintively she would bleat "No, no, too rich for me, too rich for me." She would sit in a deck chair, en-

veloped in gorgeous fur raiment, while her husband, an awfully good fellow, trotted around seeking in some way to distract her attention from her ailments. A very attractive woman was she when aroused from her lethargy, and also amusing, as she had traveled a good deal, and what is more, knew what she had seen.

We sat next to the captain, and were rather astonished to see at dessert a large bowl filled with oranges set before him. "I like oranges, and I like plenty of them," he laughingly explained, and certainly his words were confirmed by the disappearance of the fruit. The consequence was that we all imitated him in our humble way, and by our united efforts the bowl was emptied, and sometimes even refilled.

And so the time passed, and on reaching our journey's end we said goodbye to one another with genuine pleasure at our trip being so enjoyable.

We brought with us Ellen, who had been a cook in my wife's family for years, and was devoted to her. The day of our landing was Easter Sunday, fortunately a fine one. The Bostonese, though I suppose Bostonians is the correct term, turned out in their best, the promenade making, as we thought, a cheerful welcome for the present, and a happy omen for the future. The women beautifully and tastefully dressed, the fine feathers, contrary to the order in birds, being allotted to them.

That evening, Mendelssohn's oratorio of St. Paul was given in a large hall, the name of which has passed my memory. As we remember it, there was no orchestra, the accompaniment being played on a very fine organ. The solos were admirably sung, the chorus all that could be desired, evidently no small pains had been taken to render the music worthy of the great composer. My wife was delighted beyond measure, it reminded her of home where she had frequently heard it, and in fact had sung in the chorus. More than once I saw the tears gather in her eyes, as some of the more beautiful passages were rendered. Any one who can sit unmoved through that magnificent creation is more than to be pitied.

The next day we saw as much as we could of the quiet sombre city, which in many respects with its narrow and winding streets, took us back to London.

From there we journeyed, not as St. Paul, to Damascus, (the recitative of that passage preceding the glorious solo of "Jerusalem thou that stonest the prophets," still ringing in our ears) but to Chicago, stopping off at Buffalo, my wife, writing home giving it the title of Bullock, where we stayed the night, to enable us to visit Niagara Falls the next day. What a different view was presented from that when I saw them in September! Now everything near the falls was covered with ice from the spray, trees and twigs coated with it, glistening in the sun, the whole presenting a picture of marvelous beauty. Of course the volume of water was not so great, nor the prospect so magnificent as in the summer, but the scene was weird and most impressive.

On our way to Chicago we had to wait a few hours at Detroit, greatly pleased with its neat and well kept appearance, with its prettily ornamented houses of French architecture. From there to Chicago, staying there but one day, taking the night train over the same route I had taken the previous fall, until we reached Prairie du Chien. There the Mississippi valley, about four miles from shore to shore, displayed a beautiful stretch of scenery, the bluffs being well timbered. The river itself was about a mile in width, the remainder of the space being occupied by a series of islands, thus making two channels. When the ice made the use of a ferry boat impractical, a pontoon bridge was built from the east bank to the island, and another from the island to the west bank, and transportation was effected by teams. It was over this structure that we crossed the river, where we took another train, and finally our trip of nearly five thousand miles came to an end without mishap.

Most cordial was the welcome we received on our arrival. We found arrangements had been made for us to take up our abode temporarily with the caretaker of Captain A's farm half

a mile or so from town. A very comfortable place it was, and we were more than well taken care of. A small local band came out and serenaded us on the first night of our arrival, by way of showing their good will; thus we started out under happy auspices.

Ellen was duly initiated by our willing hostess into the mysteries of American housekeeping and cooking. Greatly surprised was she, and duly impressed by the sight of so many labor saving articles, the like of which she had never seen, and they were duly carried to headquarters.

There we remained until such time as the cottage on our farm could be made habitable, bidding goodbye to our host and hostess with real regret. When all was ready for flight, bag and baggage, we moved out to the cottage there, which had been repaired, papered and fumigated, with a view of rendering it habitable. But we soon discovered that these precautions were totally ineffective. The cottage though it was roomy enough, had been built of logs, and as economy would not permit a vacant space, dame nature had provided a set of flat patterned gentry with which to fill the crevices. They made themselves at home, but they drove us out of the place.

So we built a brick house in which the wicked ceased from troubling, and the weary got a rest. We were very comfortable there, made a good garden wherein we grew all manner of vegetables, also a flower garden nurtured by my wife with considerable success. But that is more than I can say for the farming operations; the balance was always in red ink, and it did not take very long to convince me that farming was a snare and a delusion, so far as I was concerned. Whereupon I sold it and moved into town.

Our faithful Ellen could not become reconciled to the situation. She said it was a hathenish country, and not fit for dacent folk to live in. She braved it out a little longer; we felt it would be cruel to ask her to stay, so she went back to her old situation. With the aid of some one connected with the Luther College, we got a very nice Norwegian maid, who after-

wards accompanied my wife to England and took care of the two children. Generally, there was no great difficulty in obtaining good and efficient servants, and, thanks to the College, we were always well supplied. Wages were low, three and a half to four dollars a week being all that was expected.

One of our friends had an elderly woman as a domestic. She was devoted to the children, but she developed one failing. Whenever people would call at the house she would get quite excited, rush into the sitting room, wailing "Coompany, coompany," and then hurry to the door to let the visitors in. Remonstrances were useless, she would say "Yes ma'am," but the next time the performance was the same.

When we were at the farm many of the wives of the townspeople came out and called on my wife, but as the roads were none of the best, one involving the crossing of a rather dubious ford, and the other negotiating a steep and badly gullied hill, many who would have liked to come were unable to do so and sent their regrets. But when we came to live in the town we made no end of friends, and hospitality was showered upon us. Tea parties were numerous, the tables being most generously laden with good things of this world, but my wife was a little disappointed at the absence of music, of which there was very little.

However, these meetings were never dull, and she used to come home delighted with the cordial reception she always found. Needless to say, the women invariably were well dressed, and what is more important, their clothes were suitable to the moment, an accomplishment in which American women excel. They certainly are the best dressed people in the world, though it must be admtted that sometimes they run a little too much to color. Gossip was never on the programme, and was absolutely tabooed. Those were the days of long dresses, good manners, and sobriety.

There was a certain set which dabbled in spiritualism, but it got into troubled water, when one of the ladies, whose husband was interested in a certain business, stated that she had a

communication from the deceased husband of one of the most influential and ardent members, saying that he wished her to invest in this business. The widow was highly indignant, saying that if they could not talk better sense they ought to disband. She never attended another meeting, and was cured of her delusion.

We had our share of eccentrics, *place aux dames*. There was one lady of uncertain age, who went by the name of Aunty Sue, who without a question had been inoculated by the demon of inquisitiveness; it took, and blazed out with extreme virulence. She was short, fat and dumpy, and as she affected the fashion then prevalent of tight lacing, she looked like an animated hour-glass. Good natured to a degree, never spiteful or sarcastic in her remarks, she had the gift of asking the most awkward questions at the most inopportune time. Sitting at the dinner table one day, she looked up and addressing the lady opposite her, asked in a deep bass voice "And what might your age be?" The answer came rather testily, "Oh, I suppose I am about as old as you are." Aunty Sue replied "I'm not ashamed of giving my age, I am forty-two." The other retorted "Indeed, well, you look like sixty," with a peculiar emphasis on the last word. Aunty Sue smiled seraphically, pondered a while, but said never a word.

One day she met upon the street a man adorned with rather a rubicund nose. She planted herself squarely in front of him, and in a bellicose tone inquired "Do you drink?" "Yes, Ma'am and eat too," he growled, and passed on. She lifted up her hands exclaiming, "Well, I never." On another occasion she signalized herself by asking a minister if he thought his efforts met with good results. He said he thought they did. She shook her head with the remark, "I am not so sure about it."

The girls used to draw her out, and one of them said she was more fun than a box full of monkeys. She had a habit of prefacing her talk with "When I was young," adding promptly, "and it ain't so long ago neither."

Then again we rejoiced in an elderly lady possessed of ample means, but parsimonious in the extreme. Her husband had been the master of a vessel engaged in the China trade. She had a large collection of trinkets that he had brought home, and on suitable occasions she would present one of these to such of the girls as found favor in her eyes; but, as she delicately hinted that she expected something in return, the gifts were not received with unmixed joy.

Of course, we had the ubiquitous youth who had inherited all the vices of his father, and none of the graces of his mother. One day one of these unregenerate specimens rushed into the sitting room where some visitors were gathered, exclaiming "Oh, mother, we cut off Jimmy's toe." "Who do you mean?" "Well, you know he was always hobbling and limping around, so we thought it better to cut it off." "Cut it off?" "Yes, we took a chisel and a hammer and cut it off at the joint. It was a neat job, and he hardly felt it. It started to bleed a little, so we put some chewing tobacco on, and now he's all right, running about like anything." It is a fact that notwithstanding this drastic treatment, the operatee felt no ill effects from the juvenile surgery, and thereafter walked uprightly, physically if not morally.

Among the unfortunates was one not inaptly known as "Nights and Sundays." The sobriquet attached thusly: One evening being found in a saloon a little the worse for wear, he was asked, "How is it, Hank, that you manage to keep your job with M?" He managed to blurt out, "Day times, business, business up to the handle," then in a rapturous voice, "but, nights and Sundays!"

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CHAPTER IV

THE COLONY

As already stated, there was quite a little colony of Englishmen in and around Decorah. The first comers were some Anglo-Indians who had served in the East Indies holding various governmental appointments. Among them was a Captain B., a most delightful fellow, whose calm demeanor and stalwart carriage proclaimed him every inch a soldier; he lived in the outskirts of the town with his wife and children in a charming bungalow. He had earned the much coveted V.C., and though he never mentioned it, I heard of his gallant exploit from others.

He too had bought a farm, but was wise enough to rent it out, the returns from which might possibly have kept him supplied with cigars, as he never smoked. His wife had instructed her cook in the mysteries of many Indian dishes, and we frequently enjoyed the results. One of their favorite dishes was dahl and rice, the former a bean used in India in a curry of that kind. Its place was taken by peas or beans when in season, at other times by dried ones. When garnished with bacon and red peppers it made a delicious curry, though too hot for the American taste. No wonder the ordinary cooking product was flat, as the use of wine, sauces and herbs was almost unknown.

After a few years he pulled up stakes, getting an appointment in the Turkish service as the head of a Police Department which he inaugurated, and administered it with great success. We never tired of listening to his accounts of life in India, as he was a most entertaining raconteur and had lived many years in that country.

Then there was another of the same guild, but moulded after a different pattern. Their house, always open to receive

the stranger, was the scene of many a pleasant entertainment, host and hostess making all feel at home. Deeply religious, unfortunately his views did not coincide with those of others. He tried various denominations, but found none of them to his liking, so he finally made up a service for himself and a few kindred spirits, in which he was the chief actor. Whatever his opinions were he kept them to himself, and never intruded them upon others.

A very pleasing conversationalist, and at the same time a good listener, the two seldom being present in unison. His changes were so numerous that the wags used to say that upon one occasion when inquiry was made of his wife as to what denomination she favored, she replied hesitatingly, "Really, I don't know, but I will ask my husband." This was going too far, for a man's religious convictions have always been held sacred.

The liturgy of the Church of England found no favor in his eyes, as being monotonous, and as he said, too much like wearing ready made clothing. Well, we all have our idiosyncrasies, and we are entitled to them. What a world it would be did we all think and act alike. His son was a bright, clever young fellow, who very wisely took up the subject of electric lighting and power, and has since made a name for himself. He is one of the two survivors: the other, a royal good fellow, has the distinction of being the only one of us who has survived the onslaught of time, and is still residing on the scene.

Another of the same fraternity was a Mr. C., most amusing, with an inexhaustible fund of Indian reminiscences told in an inimitable fashion. He was a trifle assertive perhaps, being accustomed to command; do this, and do that, came naturally to him, but he was excellent company. He had a way of quelling his children if they broke bounds, by shouting in a stentorian voice, "Steady, the Buffs," alluding to the words of a gallant Colonel, at the battle of Salamanca, I think, where the Third regiment, called the Buffs, from the color of the facings of their uniforms, began to waver. The story is that

he dismounted from his horse and led them on foot, thus restoring confidence and action. These words never failed to have the desired effect, and thereupon peace reigned in Israel.

The major part of the colony, after the manner of their sires, took to farming, with results as I have stated, distressing in the extreme. Out of all of them, none escaped the shock, except one who had a fine prairie farm, and as he had had experience in Australia, understood the game and was not frozen out.

There was, however, one notable exception, if he may be classed as a farmer, who took up the business of truck gardening, and made quite a success of it. It was really comical to see a gentleman who had been an officer in a well known regiment, peddling vegetables from a light wagon, expatiating on the virtues of his cauliflowers, egg plants and other produce, after the manner of a costermonger in the old country. He saw the joke of it, and laughed as heartily as any of us, but he had the true grit, and took it philosophically, saying, "I've got to live, and I'm not going to be ashamed of my work." It is a pity that more of us are not endowed with that same pluck. A man who is ashamed of his job may safely be marked as a cad.

One of our delights was an Hibernian, well gifted with the wit and humor of his race, but without the pugnacity which usually accompanies the other traits. Everything with him was "little," it was the little wife, though she topped him by a full inch, and little porch, though of goodly dimensions. Unfortunately, there was not granted to them a little child to whom the epithet might have been more appropriately applied. Meeting this gentleman on the road one day, he remarked, "I've been to town to get three bottles of porter for the little wife, she's not been very well lately, but I've drunk two of them on the way. You see it's a tirrible hot day."

He was very fond of bringing to light stories which had been told him by his father of the old days of fifty years back. Those were times when there was a perfect furore in Ireland

for extravagant living. Noble lords, large land owners, squires and even squireens were in a great many cases living far beyond their means. Debt upon debt, mortgage upon mortgage were the primary steps, followed by a visit to the money lender, which very shortly brought about the final crash. The farmers did not take to this revelry, but their turn came when they frequently bought up the land as it came under the hammer. Dinner parties, midnight suppers, were the precursors of cards, gambling and dicing, while the days were spent in horse racing and betting. Lever has given a graphic picture in some of his novels. When the end came the Encumbered Estates Court took jurisdiction, with the inevitable delays, and if anything was left the lawyers gobbled it.

In all these large country houses there was a roster of hangers-on, unpaid, but subsisting on the crumbs that fell from the rich men's tables. They ran errands, posted letters, held horses, did all kinds of odd jobs, including frequently lifting up and putting to bed those of the weary who were unable to rise from the floor. They cadged a meal now and then if they were in luck and made friends with the cook; sometimes the butler would need their services and reward them with a potation.

One of these social banditti came to the father of our Irish friend with a yarn that he had been offered a place in Dublin, and would his honor let him have a loan of a small sum of money to buy a suit of clothes and pay his fare. His honor, only too glad an get rid of the fellow, gave him a five pound note, telling him never to show his face round the place again. In a month or so, like the proverbial cat, he returned, and on being questioned why he had done so, replied "I lost me job, and I've spint me money," but he added, his face beaming with delight, "I've been drinking the beautifulest of porther." How I wish I could reproduce the tale as it was told.

As to the Encumbered Estates Court, a friend who used to practise there, meeting me on the street in Dublin, said he knew of a large estate in the west, of about 20,000 acres,

where there was the finest of shooting, a river full of trout, and a habitable house, which could be rented for a very reasonable sum; he had made up a party of three, but wanted a fourth, and would I join? I said I would if I could get leave, and on presenting the case to my Colonel, was told he would give me six weeks' leave.

So we made all arrangements for the 12th of August, and on the day before took the train for a small town on the border of the counties of Sligo and Mayo, with dogs, guns and fishing rods. There we were met by the caretaker with two outside cars, and after a drive of about ten miles reached the house. It was rather dilapidated, but quite habitable, and with the aid of the caretaker and his wife who had been a cook, and understood the noble art, we found ourselves in clover.

Then the shooting,—grouse, blackcock, and now and then, but seldom, a capercailzie, hares—rabbits we disdained—surpassed our dreams. The fishing was on a par with the shooting. We all had breachloaders except my lawyer friend, but what he lost in speed he made up with precision.

When we were out one day I asked the caretaker who always accompanied us, what was the meaning of a spiral column of smoke I saw in the distance. "Just nothing," said he. "Don't say anything about it, it's only some of the boys with a little still, it's little comfort they have round here, so it is." Poteen, pronounced pocheen, was the product. When made with grain it is awful when new, but age it in a sherry cask for four or five years, and it is most delectable. When grain happens to be short, then potatoes take its place, and of all the fiery liquids that man has ever produced in that line, this seems to head the list. None but the most seasoned toper could partake thereof as it came from the still, without the most terrifying contortion of the facial muscles. When the cottager sampled it, his eyes would bulge out, his throat dilate and amid a spasm of coughing and choking, he would ejac-

ulate, "Ah, that's the shtuff, it cuts the troat." Pat was wont to say "The darlint, sure it always dies young!"

On Sunday we drove to the village church, a rest for men and dogs for the day. The vicar preached an excellent sermon, keeping in mind that brevity is wit. The congregation, if it could be dignified by that name, consisted of about half a dozen. There we met Lord C. who had extensive holdings in the two counties. He said, "I see you make this a closed day, but landlord shooting knows no such law, there is no closed season, it is open all the year round." With all his joking, he did not appear to be very happy over the situation. We also met the Catholic priest, a most delightful man; as Lord C. said, "I don't know what I should do without him."

We stayed about four weeks, never was a more enjoyable time had by all of us than that. Still, there was a gloomy side to the landlord. Here was a magnificent domain, surrounded by everything that the heart of man could desire. Land, rich, capable of producing splendid crops, thousands of acres of it. Magnificent trees untouched and uncared for, the most beautiful scenery, and none to enjoy it. Property that well farmed could feed hundreds of families, lying unploughed or ungrazed. It was a sad, sad sight.

It was the same old story, the caretaker told. Years ago, the house was filled with guests, hospitality was unbounded, and after a short spell of merriment and joy, the estate fell into the hands of the Encumbered Estates Court, and when it would emerge from its grip no one could tell.

I told the tale of our experience to this son of Erin, and he narrated several cases of a similar kind. His father, he said, was fortunately not one of that class, but had seen friend after friend travel the same road.

Soon after my arrival, standing on the sidewalk, a good-looking young fellow came sauntering along. As soon as he saw me his face lit up, and he trolled out in a soft mellow barytone, "My name's Muldoon, I'm a solid man." Captivated by his gladsome looks and his charming smile, I im-

mediately held out my hand; he grasped it, and from that time we were firm friends. He was the dashing rider at the races to be alluded to later on. Three or four years later he succeeded to a property in the west of Ireland. A few days before he left he said "I know of the sweetest place you ever set your eyes on, not far from mine, it would suit you exactly." Then he dropped his voice and murmured "No, no, it wouldn't do, it wouldn't do at all." Full well did I know what he meant. No Englishman to whom life was an object would dare to purchase and attempt to live on one of those encumbered estates.

Another genial soul was L. He was found stamping round his stable in a great state of excitement, and on being asked why all this display, irascibly blurted out, "Here, I've been to town on purpose to get a leg of mutton, and I forgot all about it. Did you ever see such an infernal country?"

I must not omit M., one of the order, with a countenance like that of a cherub, guileless in aspect as an infant, but by no means devoid of humor. A time came when he developed a sharp attack of neuritis in his right arm, extremely painful, and to such an extent that he could barely move it. As he said, "I can't write, I can't even sign a cheque." A few days later someone inquired how he was getting on. "Oh, I'm much better," he rejoined, "but I'm not all right, even now I can't sign a cheque for more than ten dollars."

Of course, a couple of dozen Britishers can not congregate without trying to provide some means of playing cricket. So after a while, in order to maintan the national reputation, we got together and proceeded to form a cricket club. Funds were forthcoming, or at any rate promises of payment were extracted, a committee was nominated, likewise a captain. Then Spaulding was asked for a catalogue, and a complete outfit was ordered consisting of bats, balls, stumps, guards and other adjuncts. The next thing was to find a suitable piece of ground; after a time a pretty fair pitch was made, and with a good deal of enthusiasm the game was started. For a while it

went all right, we played a few games among ourselves, but as there were no other clubs as antagonists, a degree of languishment arose, increased as time went on, and at last the poor thing fell sick and died of inanition. The weather was hot, it was too dull; as one of them remarked, it was like kissing one's own wife.

They didn't care about baseball, and one of them ventured the statement that it was like rounders he used to play in England. Poor wretch! That brought down fire and brimstone on his head, for if there is one thing that the average American loathes and despises, it is to be told that there is any similarity between baseball and rounders. It were better for a man never to have been born than to intimate the same to a professional player of the national game. Personally, I found a good deal of pleasure in it, and played with some measure of success. At any rate, I can safely say that the worst player in the nine in which I was invited to play sometimes, was not myself.

Another source of amusement was a brass band, organized by the son of a violin player, the head of a small orchestra which played at dances, festivals, theatricals and the like. This young chap was a very fine performer on the cornet, had a very good idea of leading and of teaching, most of the instruments he could play himself. At first I played second cornet, but a much better tootler than myself joining us, I was demoted and then played first alto. We had a great deal of fun, but I am sure we played execrably.

One of us was a man who unfortunately was blind, but what he lost in sight he certainly made up for in humor. The most cheerful soul, never out of patience, taking no mean part in the drilling of the members. He also was one of the orchestra. At one time we went to a neighboring town where they had some kind of a festival, and had invited the bands roundabout to compete for a purse. We won the prize, but it was all owing to our cornet player who captivated the judges with his playing; as a matter of fact, ours was not by

any means the best band, taken as a whole. I remember that I found some operatic music belonging to my wife, and arranged it for the different instruments. It was accepted with much congratulation, but of course it was an easy matter to write a score for such a band. We played it quite often, and it went pretty well.

A small river ran below the town, and by some means or another a sailing boat was procured. She was an awful looking creation with a sail far too big for comfort or safety, being rigged as a catboat. That size of the sail was in our eyes her chief recommendation, as it afforded no end of amusement. We never took her out except there was a high wind, and if we got back without capsizing it was more by good luck than management. One of the co-owners was a good sailor, and when he was along things went serenely, but when we took her out without him it was a fearsome trip. Being a catboat, she had a nasty trick of yawing, not uncommon in boats of that rig, and being over caparisoned in the matter of sail, all the time she would be trying to turn round, as if to look at us, and it required constant attention to keep her head straight, for if she were successful in her waywardness, over we went for a certainty.

Then again, the sail was very apt to jack-knife, which consisted in the boom flying up in the air and becoming entangled in the hamper of ropes at the top of the mast, a very perilous proceeding, as the sail would belly out with the wind, and unless some one shinned up the mast and released the boom, she would quietly roll over and rest upon her beam ends. The townspeople never could be persuaded to accompany us. They were a peaceful lot, the game was a little too strenuous. They thought we were mad, and I am not sure but what they were right. However, we did not care to take passengers who could not work their passage in the way of taking a hand when needed.

We had one curious affair. One of our friends was very anxious to take a trip, and with some misgivings, we took him

along one day. There was a fair wind, and everything went smoothly. But after a while the wind freshened until at last it blew pretty hard. As she careened over until the water rubbed her coaming our passenger suddenly developed a terrible fright. He held on to a rope, and although we shouted to him to come over to windward, he could not be persuaded to move. I never saw a man so terrified. At last we came to a bend in the river, and were able to luff up and make a landing, the banks to leeward being boggy. Just as we were ready to let him off he made a wild spring and managed to clutch the bank, with his feet dangling in the water. At last, by dint of scrambling and kicking, he extricated himself, and the last we saw of him he was legging it for home for all he was worth. It was a clear case of water-shy. I have seen a dog who was gun-shy, who upon seeing a shot gun would either lie down and whimper, or else take to his heels, but never before did I see the like in a man. He was not a coward by any means, but as he told me afterwards, he was not afraid, but was scared out of his life.

The name of the boat was the Psyche; a loiterer, as we were getting ready for a run, said that was the dickens of a way to spell Fish, but his companion rebuked him and, with an explanation more forcible than polite, told him the name was Physic. I believe some time later she ran upon a sandbank in a gale, her sail was torn to tatters, her mast broke, and she was abandoned as a total wreck.

Let me not forget the theatricals which were the joy of our lives, and whiled away the dreary winter with its Arctic embrace. Captain B. was, to use a hackneyed phrase, a born actor, and could easily have made his way upon the stage. Tragedy, comedy, extravaganza, nigger minstrels, were all within his ken, he was equally at home with one as with the other. He danced to perfection, but unfortunately, singing was not his forte, though he could pass muster in a chorus. The rest of us were good, bad or indifferent; I belonged to the last class though always had a pretty good part. The town

people joined in helping us out, some of them took part in the performances and enjoyed them as much as we did; they held up their end of the stick all right.

We essayed scenes from the Merchant of Venice, of course, one of the cast booming out with "a Dan'l come to judgment." Mons is not an uncommon name among the Norwegians, and Mons. Bernard was rendered as Mons Bernand until it was suggested that the gentleman in question was a Frenchman. There is quite an assemblage of the playbills in my scrap book. Also we had some very good costume plays which took very well, the dresses being hired from a costumer in Milwaukee.

On one of these achievements, a decided slimness in the development of his leg being apparent, the actor undertook to remedy the defect by resorting to padding the recalcitrant member. During the play, he strode up close to the footlights, when an unmistakable tittering arose among the audience, growing in strength as he proceeded. Looking down, he saw to his dismay that one of the paddings had worked to the front, presenting a most abnormal appearance. He did not, however, lose his presence of mind, but joining in what had now become hilarious laughter, calmly adjusted the wayward padding, and proceeded with his part as if nothing had happened. When we saw the mishap the first idea was to lower the curtain, but that would have made matters worse, as the victim was close to the footlights. There was nothing to be done but to wonder how he could extricate himself; we never expected such a display of nonchalance. Few indeed is the number of those who could show such consummate nerve.

Bombastes Furioso brought down the house, and Box and Cox did very well in keeping up our reputation. But the grandest success of all was Pinafore. We had to import some talent for two of the characters, but the role of the Captain was remarkably well sung by one of our members, and the Gilbert and Sullivan masterpiece was played for three nights to crowded houses.

In another play there was the usual contretemps when a sup. who had begged for a part and had merely to appear as a footman and announce, "My lord, the carriage waits," touched his hat and in a loud voice proclaimed, "My carriage, the lord waits."

The Opera House, as it was called, was of ample dimensions, well lighted, good accoustics, and would have been a credit to a town thrice the size of Decorah. Its erection came about in this way. A well to do German kept a saloon, and in a manner above reproach. It would be grossly unfair to class him as a saloon keeper, though he did keep a saloon. He was one of those honest, quiet Germans that we used to meet half a century ago. He would allow no boisterous talk or conduct in his place, and when he thought a customer had had as much as was good for him he would refuse to serve him further. He sold most excellent beer which he got from Milwaukee where they understood the art. I never knew a man who could coax so much froth into a glass. Hence the joke arose, "Well, Fritz, let's have another half glass of beer." "I can give you a full glass of S.'s beer if you like," alluding to a vile concoction always impregnated with pitch, with a strong suspicion of aloes, the product of a local brewery, for the proprietor of which we invented the title of "Bibulous Bill." Our German friend prospered and saved his money. Then arose the idea of building what he termed an Opera House.

He owned the building, using the ground floor for his business, the second he lived in with his wife, they had no children, and the third floor was vacant. The very place for the project. He spared no expense, sent away for scene painters and necessary fittings, with the result that there was nothing outside of the large cities that could vie with it. It brought to the town a series of good lectures during the winter months which otherwise would never have been vouchsafed to us. They were always well attended. Nowhere in the world can you find such a craze for lectures as in the States. We selected our own lecturers and were well treated, but the most frightful rubbish

was frequently foisted upon the unwary. Personally, I loathe lectures, and to me political speeches are an abomination, although I never heard but one, and that amply sufficed. Why lectures, when you can read far better material at your leisure?

CHAPTER V

AMUSEMENTS

The heralding of a circus was a great event, with flaming posters before which children would stand, eyes wide open, mouths stretched to abnormal dimensions, the real question for them being whether they would be permitted to feast their eyes on the glories so liberally depicted. The circus of those days was a very moderate affair in reality, and great was the disappointment when the behemoth and other strange beasties failed to put in an appearance. But, at any rate, the street parade was free, and the schools were closed for a time to allow the procession of caged animals, real elephants and gaudily painted wagons, with beautiful ladies liberally daubed with rouge, and a clown in motley riding thereon, to be seen at close quarters. Then there was a Calliope, the final usually pronounced as in hope, with its steam whistles most horribly out of tune, but greeted by the youngsters with shrieks of joy. People came from miles away to revel in the bareback riding, the feats of strength, the fire-eating wizard, and the antics of the clown. Then there were the side shows, rather disappointing, the crackling peanut, gooby in the south, the pink lemonade, and the circus was over.

Every one who had a quarter to jingle on a gravestone produced it from some hidden recess. Children's banks were rifled ruthlessly, chickens gave up their lives in countless numbers, sometimes even a pig was sacrificed to furnish cash for the great event. Eggs of course were a medium of exchange, but they were so cheap that it was all that the housewife could do to scare up enough to furnish the wherewithal, especially if the progeny happened to be numerous.

We were told of an improvident couple who sold their cook

stove to satisfy the lust of the circus, but I should not like to vouch for the truth of the story. It is a fact, nevertheless, that they were always in financial whirlpools, and when a windfall came in the shape of cash from some kindly soul, they would expend it in the most luxurious diet. Was it Goldsmith, to whom when some one gave a guinea to keep him from starvation, purchased an ortolan therewith, and was found cooking it over a miserable fire? By the way, in a paper of the highest repute lately appeared a statement that the word starvation is an Americanism. That is an error. The word was coined by Viscount Dundas, an intimate friend and political adherent of Pitt the younger, and thereafter he went by the name of Starvation Dundas. He was a prominent figure in Gillray's caricatures. Perhaps the sole instance of the joining of a Latin final to an Anglo-Saxon verb.

Dancing parties were very popular, not only among the younger set, but the grown-ups had their share, I think weekly. They had a small orchestra composed of a violin and a cornet, on grand occasions a flute tootled and a trombone brayed. The violinist gave out the movements to be performed in a loud sing song tone, such as, alaman right, alaman left, swing your partners, face round and dance with the lady behind you, concluding with, take your partner to her seat. It was no languid, head in air dancing, it was a serious affair, a business transaction, with little or no conversation; some of the male performers indulging in capers and cutting pigeon wings, in a manner that would have elicited applause from a French dancing master. Nowadays the Americans are recognized as the world's best dancers, and they certainly deserve the title.

One of the best of them was a rather eccentric elderly gentleman. He delighted to go with the English boys, as he called them. Among his peculiarities was that whenever he spent a cent he would out with his pocket book and enter the amount. He, as the rest of us, was not averse to a glass of beer or a noggin of whisky, and would often treat his friends.

The boys would sometimes play a little joke on him. He would ask them what they would take, and the response would be, a glass of beer. Out the pocket book would come, and when the entry was made and the book stowed away, someone would say, I think I will take a little whisky instead of beer. So then the pocket book was again produced, and like Captain Cuttle, he would make a note of it. He had been for many years a clerk in a small bank, hence this highly methodical habit.

A custom had sprung up upon taking a glass of beer for the imbibers to greet one another with "Ho," which was said to be derived from the Indians, from whence arose the story of an Englishman, who on hearing the same said, "Why do say 'O,' does it 'urt?" A brother of our methodical friend died, I was unable to attend the funeral, but meeting him a few days later, condoled with him and expressed my regret that I was unable to pay my last respects. He said, "Yes, I missed you, I was sorry you were not there, we had a very pleasant funeral." Then he added, seeing rather a peculiar look upon my face, "I mean, of course as pleasant as could be expected."

Some of us had a touch of sporting blood in our veins, and a little race meeting was suggested. One of our clan, who by the way, dropped his h's with reckless profusion, the only one who did so, though I will give him the credit of not interpolating them when not needed, entered into the project with great enthusiasm. From his extraordinary knowledge of racing matters, it was evident that in some way he had been connected with the turf in England, that he was an expert in that line cannot be denied. He turned his learning to good account, what we should have done without him is impossible to tell, as he took the whole affair into his own hands, and certainly handled it in a masterly manner. He was well versed in the art of handicapping, which is in itself a matter of no slight difficulty, managing it so well that though there were a

good many entries, each race was closely contested, and there were no complaints that his judgment was at fault.

The main race was won by one of our men, it was owing to the superb skill of the rider that we carried off the laurels. The jockeys all wore colors and caps, quite en regle, and made a brave appearance as they came galloping home. At first it seemed as if the whole thing would be confined to the English, but there were a lot of good sports round the country, and as soon as they heard of the programme, they came in with their horses, and were as enthusiastic as any of us. The honors were pretty evenly divided, but the great event was a free for all, with a handicap, the result showing it was a fair one, for the main body of the animals came in quite closely, though the entries were numerous. My animal was the favorite, but he failed even to get a place; the second and third horses were owned by our outside friends; they admitted that they had a fair deal, and acted as real sportsmen. They bet pretty heavily among themselves, but on our side the amounts wagered were small.

There was one race, owners up, that created a good deal of fun, as some of them were nervous, never having ridden in a race before, and one poor fellow was ignominiously kicked off at the start. The winner of the main race was a young fellow, not too much blessed with the needful, so we were all well pleased with the result. He said he never had so much money in his life, and he didn't propose to fool it away. He was a fine young chap, had been at Marlborough, I think, evidently having given a good account of himself, as the cups he had gave evidence.

Then followed two hurdle races, at which some of the animals balked, and more than one rider was thrown over his horse's head. A complimentary card of admission to the Decorah Annual Flat and Hurdle Races still adorns my scrapbook, an elaborate affair, very well gotten up. Quite a gala day it was. Every one who could manage to appear was there; some in carriages, some on horseback, the majority on

foot. Grand was the display of dresses and millinery, indeed a colorful scene.

This kind of racing was not prevalent, though up north there some very fine running horses, the owners competing privately among themselves. But when it came to trotting, then Decorah was in the swim. Quite a good sized community of men from Ohio had settled near by; not only were they successful farmers, but they had more than the usual modicum of sporting instinct. They imported some well bred horses for farm work, not forgetting the trotting end of it. Frequently they could be seen putting their animals through their paces on the race track, while some of the town people were not backward in the game, many of them owning some fine trotters. Sulkies, sometimes gaudily painted, but generally of a sombre tint, would be seen on a fine afternoon, especially on Saturdays, but never on a Sunday, trying out the qualities of their trotters on the fair grounds. Great was the exultation when someone broke the local record, but the more knowing ones kept these matters quiet, fully appreciating the advantages to be gained thereby at the next fair or race meeting.

These same men also did not expend all their efforts on horses, but remembered the farming side of the question, and helped to improve the quality of the hogs in the vicinity, by bringing in some well bred boars, the kind most generally favored being the Chester White, though Berkshires were not neglected. Thoroughbred cattle were not much in evidence, the climate being too severe for the Channel Islands varieties, though a few shorthorns were now and then to be seen, and sometimes a Hereford, which was always pronounced Heerford. In vain, I who was born and had lived in Herefordshire, suggested the proper pronunciation. It was "Well, we ought to know, and we ain't going to change it."

Another source of amusement in the winter, not to be passed by lightly, was the skating rink; it was very popular and well patronized by old and young, indeed some of the

youngsters were among the best performers. The professors of the Norwegian Luther College, with their wives, were constant visitors, skating perhaps with a little more sedateness than the students and others who took part. The students of course were in their element, and figures of eight, the outside edge backwards, and similar movements not easly acquired by the tyro, were executed by them as a mere matter of routine.

Undoubtedly the most graceful and daring skater was the daughter of the principal of the College. She was always the centre of attraction; her poise was so perfect, the ease with which she did the most difficult feats was not only a revelation but a source of pleasure to all. To beginners she was very good, especially to the younger children whom she drilled until they were quite expert. My wife used to call on her mother at the College, always meeting with a kindly welcome, accompanied later by the appearance of cake and wine. There was also a Canadian and his wife, both of whom skated beautifully, they went sometimes to Norway to indulge in skating, skiing and other winter sports.

One of our number was a splendid scholar, why he ever came out was a puzzzle to all of us. My impression is that he was a Senior Wrangler at Cambridge. He was a fine, handsome fellow, but kept a good deal to himself, did not take much interest in our sports, though he played an excellent part in our theatricals. He was almost daft on Horace and was continually quoting it. One day, meeting him in the street, he planted himself before me and recited a few lines from one of the Odes. "There," he said, "isn't that grand, did you ever hear such a splendid description." Then he recited it in the Continental pronunciation, which was beginning to be the fashion here and abroad. He minced the words and mimicked the French accent. "Takes all the life and spirit out of it, doesn't it?" He was so vehement that a little crowd began to gather. "Odi profanum vulgus," he muttered and passed on. We frequentiy bandied quotations between us, now and then

it was, "Nunc est bibendum," followed by a cheerful vale.

He was a most interesting fellow, extremely well read, a perfect walking encyclopedia. After all he was wiser than most of us, for he had not the craving for land, but started a book store, sold newspapers and magazines, adding subsequently a lending library. He used to complain that there were too many book keepers as distinguished from book-keepers. Occasionally someone would stroll into his store and mutter, "Wanee, wedee, wickee," (Veni, vidi, vici.) "Very pretty indeed, I hope you like it," he would say. Poor fellow, he did not live out the full measure of days; sadly and silently we laid him to rest.

CHAPTER VI

CUSTOMS

The country was well suited for diversified farming, those who desired to engage in raising grain finding the open prairie land suited to their wants, while others who preferred to go in for stock and breed horses, cattle or hogs selected the well timbered and watered sections as more to their liking. The growing of grain bringing in quicker results, naturally appealed more to those whose resources were limited, and the number of wagons on the street laden with bags of grain testified to the fact that grain was the choice of the multitude. The wheat was grown mostly on the prairie land of which there was a goodly acreage, but there was a large stretch of country, hilly and well wooded, and more or less bottom lands on the banks of the river.

A very large percentage of the farmers were Scandinavians, and excellent citizens they made. If Ole had a weakness it was for alcohol which with sugar and hot water he made into punch. This was always drunk at their houses, they were very fond of entertaining each other, playing cards and the like. A rare occurrence it was when one of them overstepped the bounds of propriety in the town. They were tremendous workers, lived frugally, many of them becoming quite wealthy. Their good sense was apparent when, as they prospered, they invariably built a large barn before they graduated from the log cabin to a frame house.

Hans and Fritz were pretty well represented, good natured and obliging, but I missed the ornamented mugs and long-stemmed pipes with the painted bowls of former days. Sauer kraut abounded in various stages of decomposition, according to taste, and sausages festooned the butcher's shop, the

dark brown Strassburg and the pale complected liverwurst; while, lest the relish should be forgotten when these were out of season, the hardier summer sausage filled in the vacancy. They also sacrificed on the altar of Gambrinus, and Bock Bier was not unknown. Seldom did they touch the bottled corn or rye, though in the cold days of winter a little schnapps might be indulged in. I do not remember ever seeing an Italian, zero weather hath little charm for the cheerful denizen of the sunny south.

Spring wheat was the staple, number 1, northern hard, bringing the highest price, and in great demand by millers for its flouring qualities. Corn, known in England as maize, at first was of a small variety, but increased in size until a good marketable product was reached. Two rowed barley was not on the schedule, but the six rowed kind was of excellent quality, much in demand by brewers and maltsters, who grudged the amount that went into bread. Rye was in the same category, this time it was the distillers who made the same complaint. Oats were fed to the horses in summer and corn in winter, the latter being doled out in the ear, and eaten after the manner of their masters, discarding the cobs. Turnips as a food for cattle and sheep were not raised, too chilly a diet. Alfalfa, lucerne in France and England, that plant of wonderful pedigree, over two thousand years old, had not presented itself to this region.

Wood was cheap, hardwood selling from four and a half to five dollars a cord. This consisted mainly of hickory, oak, birch, and sometimes black walnut, while bass was the chief support of the soft kind, which was used more in summer, fetching not much over three dollars a cord. It was quite a trick to pile three quarters of a cord and make it measure 128 cubic feet, but an expert could do it unblushingly. Some anthracite coal was consumed, most of the stores and houses though were heated by wood. Furnaces were getting more common, now and then a house would be found "het by steam."

Bread was almost invariably baked at home, some of it never should have been. When properly made with yeast it was all that could be desired; but it must be confessed that there were cases where it would have been better if the housewife had patronized a baker who came round with a light wagon purveying bread of various kinds, cakes, cookies, doughnuts and other specimens of the product of the oven. He knew his business.

In the country especially, they used to bake with what they called salt risings, horribly sour was the result; also soda biscuits, with a light yellow tinge, salivating and extremely unwholesome, save perhaps to one of more than the average digestive powers.

Butter came mostly from the farmers, most of it good, some very fine, some poor, much indifferent, words fail to express the quality of the remainder.

Up north lived a man who had a maple grove, making a kind of maple syrup that should be spoken of with bated breath. He made it by a process known only to himself. It had a savor distinctly its own, far above that of the much vaunted Vermont kind. You had to go and get it, and frequently it required a little coaxing before he would part. It was well worth the journey.

Groceries were fairly reasonable in price, but sugar was dear, Coffee A was the regular standard. Most or at any rate much of the tea was Japan, producing a pinkish colored liquid, horrible to our taste, we could never get used to it. Green tea was much affected, gunpowder especially, which was of very good quality. Black or English Breakfast tea was hardly up to the average. Coffee, however, was the general standby, and if you exclude the Rio, was excellent, and they knew how to make it too. Meat was very cheap, beef fairly good, but too lean for the British taste. No mutton, but lamb, good, not much in demand.

The popular clamor was for beefsteak, not only for dinner, but at breakfast and supper. A bank official once told me he

could eat beefsteak three times a day, and from his appearance I am inclined to think that he put his precept into practise.

Next to beef pork marched in order, pork chops being a favorite dish, and right good they were if cut from a pig, and not from a hog. Sucking pigs though were an unknown luxury, so that Charles Lamb would have fled the country. In the country salt pork, home cured, was the general diet, and when well cooked was by no means to be despised, but as often eaten three times a day, hardly to be recommended. To the American farmer it was indispensable, but not so among the Scandinavians, who largely went in for imported salt fish. Some of it, stockfish, used to come in bundles bound with wire, the fish was about as hard as the binding material; but by some means unknown to the uninitiated, they reduced it to a very palatable dish.

Chickens and turkeys were both good and low in price; they were in great demand, and nearly always provided the piéce de resistance for the Sunday dinner. What was not known in the way of cooking these estimable birds was not worth knowing. Geese and ducks were not so much in favor, though at Thanksgiving and at Christmas the former frequently took the place of the proverbial turkey, when financial depression suggested economy.

Breakfast foods and cereals were at that time unknown, save in the shape of corn and oatmeal, and even their use was restricted almost entirely to the farming community. But wheat cakes, and buckwheat cakes with honey, of blessed memory, ended a bountiful meal.

There was one dish which we never could tackle, and that was sausages with molasses, but it disappeared marvelously on other tables, and our want of taste was sadly deplored. Sorghum was another adjunct, reconciliation to which my wife and I were strangers. To us it had a burnt flavor probably the fault of the maker; as it is seen even now sometimes in a gro-

cery store, I suppose it must possess some subtle dignity of its own.

Fruit when in season was plentiful, otherwise not easily obtainable. Apples were excellent, but did not keep well, except those brought in from more eastern states. Peaches steadily refused to be acclimated, simply could not be raised. They were obtained from eastern points, largely from Michigan, but being picked long before they were ripe were about as satisfactory as bullets. Even when cooked they were, as they say in Scotland, "puir feckless things." Their attitude was, you may come to us, but we will not go to you. Who could blame them? They said, It is all very well for you to raise apples with a cast iron constitution and casehardened vitals, but how could you expect that self-respecting trees of delicate health and a limited tenure of life, would attempt to brave the perils of an Arctic winter? So home grown peaches were out of the question.

Melons, both sweet and water, grew in the open. The former when raised in gardens made a pleasant adjunct to the breakfast, but as brought in from the country were generally impregnated with a flavor of squash, a clear case of evil communications corrupting good manners. Watermelons in hot weather were the especial delight of children, and when well iced were not despised by their elders.

In the country there was an abundant supply of wild fruit, strawberries, gooseberries, huckleberries, and plums, some of the trees bearing fruit of a most delicious flavor. Sometimes a mandrake would show its head; unfortunately its excellence was overshadowed by its rarity. Nuts of various kinds were gathered, butternuts, black walnut, hickory and hazel in profusion, and stowed away for the winter evenings. Cultivated fruit was known as tame fruit.

All ordinary vegetables were easily grown in the open, but lima beans were raised with difficulty, running a race with the season, and seldom victorious. Really good lettuce was denied to us; only under professional treatment and in favored local-

ities can that most delicious of plants be grown to perfection. Yet if you inquire of the prospective commuter what he expects to grow in his garden, he will invariably respond, radishes and lettuce. Yes, the former I grant, but the latter will be a dismal failure, eaten only because "it was grown in our garden," unless tended by experienced hands.

Cheese was much patronized, monotonous in expression, but varying in quality. Skim milk cheese of course stands self-condemned without a hearing. The home product inferior, but sometimes surreptitiously inserted into the children's lunch basket, a rather unwelcome visitor, not consumed with avidity. Wisconsin sent a better kind, improvement was apparent as we went east, but it was not until we reached New York that we got a cheese that would make a good Welsh rarebit, a very reliable test. Their Young America, in shape like a Stilton, but alas, with none of its flavor, was a very good ordinary cheese, which could be eaten without bread.

Speaking of cheese, Limberger was largely consumed in the country, and they told of a little girl, who seated on her father's knee, after he had been thus indulging, shouted as she slid to the ground, "Why, father, you've eaten something dead."

At one time there was a perfect mania for planting apple trees, carefully fostered and nurtured by eastern nurserymen. Peddlers sold them in incredible quantities, distributing circulars and dodgers, setting forth the different varieties of the trees, and profits to be made therefrom. In two or three years these trees began to bear fruit, and soon there was a plethora of apples, the market became glutted, prices dropped down to zero, and gloom settled upon the growers. As the farmers said, in a poor year you get no apples, and in a good one you can't sell them. The consequence was that the orchards were very largely ploughed up. The very name of an apple became anathema. It would have been a bold man indeed who would have ventured into that region with a load of apple trees for sale.

No evaporated apples or peaches, but they appeared in a dried form, and dried they certainly were. Sometimes they were strung on thread, and then they were a little better. Canned goods were not much in vogue, though Cove oysters were more or less approved of by the farming community. After a while oysters came in pails, being usually converted into oyster soup, a rather vapid production, but a never failing resource at suppers for charitable and other purposes.

Then for fear that the agriculturists should become overly rich, another inroad was made, and this time it was lightning rods. The peddlers hailed it with joy, repainted their wagons, and soon they were scouring the country with them, laden with lightning rods of every description, suited to please every taste. Beginning with a strip of copper which might carry a spark from an ordinary battery, but which would no more convey the load of a lightning flash than a pint pot would hold a gallon, and was really a source of infinite danger, the procession marched along until it culminated in a really good rod, which if struck would probably be effective as a conductor. But these last ones were quite expensive, and as the profit lay in the cheaper kinds, they were the ones on which the stress was laid, and their virtues more highly extolled. In nine cases out of ten, the arguments of the peddler prevailed, and the cheaper kind was elected.

He had all the eloquence of Sam Slick, and by the time he had got through the house was adorned with a perfect array of copper strips, rising like bayonets above the roof, surmounted with spear-shaped points. Then naturally the barn must not be neglected, so it was similarly embellished; if the owner could be prevailed upon, a vane was added, topped with a horse, covered with real gold leaf made of Dutch foil.

When the bill was presented the farmer was aghast, but was solaced with the statement that he could give his note for part of it. So after extracting all the available cash that could be collected the peddler departed, having comforted himself with a few meals, for which in the hurry of the moment he neglected

to pay, to seek another victim. In due course of time the farmer received a polite note requesting him to call and settle his note, together with interest at the comfortable rate of ten per cent, which the peddler had promptly sold to the banker, who in turn probably "shaved" it at a discount of another ten or fifteen per cent. I will admit that the work was well done, and remained as a monument to the folly of the householder, who was totally unaware that the presence of a few tall trees was an infinitely better protector than any lightning rod, while on the open prairie the latter was a positive source of danger.

Many and frequent were the traps set by "them eastern fellers" as they were termed, for the unwary farmer. There was twelve rowed corn, which of course would not mature in that climate; there was Danish wheat, Norwegian oats, also wonderful fertilizers, composed mostly of sawdust and ground leather. It was a repetition of Jorrocks, who according to Surtees, persuaded his tenants to fertilize their fields with sugar, an article in which he dealt wholesale.

There was very little governmental supervision; newspapers were filled with fraudulent advertisements, such as would not be tolerated for a moment at this time. Gold was at an enormous premium, it took about a hundred dollars in greenbacks to buy sixty in gold. There was no small coinage, paper scrip, shinplasters, they were called, being issued in sums of three, five, ten, twenty-five and fifty cents.

Threshing machines were operated by horse power, from eight to as many as twelve horses being required. There had to be teams to carry away the grain, and if it was threshed from the shock, which was often done, the number was greatly increased. To this add the number of men requisite around the machine, and it will be seen that threshing was a strenuous affair. To prepare meals for a crew of hungry men was no child's play, early and late hours for the women of the house were the order of the day. Steam engines were introduced later, but at first were rather regarded with askance, several instances of fire from sparks putting a damper on their use; ulti-

mately steam won the victory, and the horsepower with its bullwheel went into the discard. Very few utilized the manure, and it was thrown outside the barn and left unheeded. Indeed, sometimes the barn was moved a short distance to get away from the pile of manure.

When the homestead law was enacted the tillers found that they had more land than they could cultivate properly, and the surface was only scratched; after a short time, wheat being the only crop, the soil became exhausted more or less, especially on the prairies, and instead of twenty or twenty-five bushels to the acre, eight, ten, or twelve at the most was the usual crop. Of course there was no homestead land anywhere near Decorah, North and South Dakota and farther west being the nearest points where the law could be applied.

With us snake fences were generally built, entailing no outlay of cash, though a vast amount of labor. As the rails were cut during the winter when there was little else to do, they made a cheap and at the same time an efficient fence. The chief drawback was that owing to their zigzag shape, they harbored weeds which found their way into the fields. Gates presented a more difficult problem. It was easy to construct a gateway with movable bars, but when it came to putting up one as an entrance to a barnyard, for instance, it was not as easy as rolling off a log. Many were the plans devised, and a good deal of ingenuity was called into play to avoid the expense of lumber, hinges and latches.

In the southern part of the State they had a terrible visitation from the seven years locusts, which devoured every single thing in the way of vegetation that came in their way. Trees were stripped of their leaves, and a large section of the country devastated. This happened for three successive years, and then the depredators came not again, but many of the farmers were ruined, pulled up stakes and abandoned everything. The money grabbers secured a tremendous harvest, buying up the tax titles to these abandoned farms, as the owners in many

cases were so completely cleaned out that they could not even pay their taxes.

Think of it, oh ye motorists of the present day, gasoline was a drug on the market, and could hardly be disposed of at any price! The oil producers and refiners looked for an output that contained the least possible amount of gasoline, and millions of gallons of the latter were thrown away; it was in fact, the fly in the ointment. The natural consequence was that much of the kerosene sold held a dangerous amount of gasoline, until the legislature came to the rescue.

CHAPTER VII

DECORAH

The town, so named for a famous Indian chief whose passport to the happy hunting grounds was honored many decades ago, is situated in the extreme northeastern part of the state, about 20 miles from the Minnesota line, and 40 miles west of the Mississippi river. It was always quiet and peaceful, free from noisy brawlings and disturbances. No place of its size within a reasonable distance could show a cleaner record.

Probably the absence of a railroad for some time had been a contributing factor in keeping away hoboes and other undesirables, whose usual method of travel was on blind baggage or underneath the cars, freight and passenger. In fact it was almost a model town. Not that the jail was pulled down and on the site a turtle-dovecot erected, nor that the people were not fully equal to the occasion, or were an easy prey to the adventurer. Indeed, it was pretty generally recognized that if one wished to get the better of one of them it behooved him to rise early, brush off the morning dew, and meditate seriously before undertaking the business.

No multiplicity of churches, that bane of most western towns, existed, consequently their resources not being scattered, the salaries paid were above the average, and they were able to secure ministers of high abilities and culture. Changes were uncommon, the congregations not being fickle. They were liberal to others, and the use of their churches was tendered to our little coterie of Episcopalians.

There were three weekly newspapers, one of them especially good, the editor being a man of mark, and a very pleasant companion I found him on becoming well acquainted with him later. The other two, I fear, enjoyed rather a precarious ex-

istence. Also a Norwegian weekly, edited by a man of far more than ordinary talent, and one well worth while to know.

The town boasted with other minor affairs, a good wagon factory, a fair sized flour mill, also a woolen mill and a cracker factory. The two last mentioned had a hard and rugged life, and I believe, finally gave up the ghost. A fine Luther College, already alluded to, stood on a hill overlooking the town. It had a strong faculty, headed by a president of marked ability. They turned out well educated scholars, many of whom have made names for themselves in the literary and scholastic world. The students organized a glee club, giving public recitals, which brought forth generous applause, especially those parts which were rendered without instrumental accompaniment, in which they certainly did excel.

It was a red letter day for Decorah when the railroad was completed and cars ran into the town. We had seen evidences of its near completion when my wife and I first made our debut in the spring of 1869, but it was not until the middle of September of the same year that the last rail was laid. Great were the rejoicings, numerous were the speeches, the orators of the town having the opportunity of their lives to display their ability, or, to shoot off their mouths, as the more irreverent put it. It turned out, however, that the results of the advent were not quite up to what had been so vividly portrayed. It seemed to produce no immediate influx, or increase in the population, though undoubtedly certain material advantages did accrue. True, there was a slight rise in the prices paid for agricultural products, but the railroad took care that the increase should not be so great as to shock the farmers.

The right of way from the main line was as crooked as a ram's horn, the company had to send a careful engineer to handle the locomotive; as the curves were very sharp, speed had to be regulated accordingly. That this precaution was timely, was well illustrated when on one day another engineer was at the throttle and undertook to pilot the train, with the result that at a sharp curve the engine left the track and reclined

comfortably on its side in an adjacent meadow. No one was hurt, as the coach was not overturned; soon the wrecking crew arrived, in a short time built a track to the recumbent locomotive, and with the aid of a derrick put humpty-dumpty on its wheels again.

The court house situated on a little eminence made a good appearance, offices fairly well furnished and the court room of reasonable size. District Courts were held four times a year I think, by two judges. One of them was an excellent lawyer with all the qualities for the making of a good judge, but he had certain eccentricities which detracted from the dignity of his office. He would loll back in his chair, put his feet upon the bench in front of him, close his eyes and appear not to be interested in the case. But let an objection be made, or a point of law raised, and it was evident at once that he was following the case with due earnestness. About the middle of the session he would say "The Court would enjoy a smoke. Mr. Sheriff, we will take a recess for fifteen minutes." Then out would come pipes and cigars, and there would be a friendly talk all round. The time was not wasted, for quite often a case was settled during these intermissions. If a cigar were offered him he would always decline. "Thank you, I prefer my own," one of those awful Pittsburgh stogies. He was prompt in his decisions, never let his work get ahead of him, and his opinions were seldom reversed.

The other judge was of a different calibre. Good looking, quiet and reserved, he looked the model judge, and he lived up to that ideal. The bar was decidedly a strong one. They were without exception men of legal acquirements. Their services were in constant demand from neighboring towns, even from the larger cities. The cases were mostly local and of small import; I can remember but one murder trial in ten years.

Actions for divorce were rare, I do not call to mind any in which our residents were concerned. True, once there was a slight rumbling of thunder, and a few flashes, but the matter

did not come into court. The cut-and-come-again idea had not taken root, and the quick action, flimsy excuses, and hand-me-down plan had not been invented. Quick enough in other affairs, they were simple minded, primitive folk in that respect. They looked upon matrimony as a sacred obligation, and one husband or one wife sufficed.

A malpractice case was being tried, the plaintiff represented by a young attorney who was overweighted by the difficulty of the case. He asked question after question, only to find his adversary, who was an experienced hand, objecting to them and being sustained by the court. At last, he lost his temper, and accused opposing counsel with obstructing justice, taking unfair advantage and other things, using the most vituperative language. Finally he sat down, and the judge turned to the other counsel, expecting a reply. But to the astonishment of all, he merely got up and said, "Now, as I was saying, your honor," and proceeded as if nothing had happened. He was a clever lawyer, and knew that if he answered the young man, and demolished him as he certainly would have done, the jury would very likely be hostile to him, as they generally are apt to favor the under dog in a fight. He won the case.

An old lawyer from a neighboring town appeared in court one day defending an action for sheriff's fees. He was a queer looking fellow, without a collar, but with a face as keen as a razor. He had a voice like a cornsheller, with a frightful nasal twang. Arguing the case, he said "When a sheriff makes a levy and finds goods not exempt, he gets his fee," and then raising his voice, added "and that's the c-r-e-a-m," drawling out the word to its full length; "but when he can't find any goods, and he makes a return nulla bona, then he gets no fees, and that's the s-k-i-m m-i-l-k," drawling it with like emphasis. The bar tittered, and even the judge smiled at the simile.

There was a good graded public school, with a corps of excellent teachers. The course was confined to the elements of a ordinary every day education; the ologies and isms of the present day fortunately were not part of the curriculum. This

was well seen in the spelling contests which were quite common, and the children spelled with an accuracy that would put to shame many a high school girl. A private school was well patronized and deserved the success which it enjoyed. Unfortunately, it was difficult to obtain competent teachers for the country schools; the trouble was attributed mainly to the excessive heat and cold. Bad roads also contributed their share, making it difficult for the children to reach the school house. This was aggravated in the winter, and when a blizzard put in an appearance locomotion was at a stand still.

The County Fair was of course a great attraction, but as all gatherings of that ilk are more or less alike, nothing need be said, save that it was the usual pumpkin and potato, horse trotting and fancy work affair, and gave another opportunity for speechifying, an accomplishment which invariably draws a big crowd, though lectures run as a good second.

The Fourth of July, however, was a horse of quite a different color. No city, town, village or hamlet but had its orator for that day. The lion's tail was skillfully twisted by strong hands, and he who twisted it the hardest and best carried off the honors. It reminded one of a passage in The Vicar of Wakefield, where it says that a chapter from the Bible was read every morning by the vicar's children, and he who read loudest, distinctest and best was to have a halfpenny on Sunday to put in the poorbox.

Still the crowning glory of all were the parades on the eve of a presidential election, when in addition to the speeches, as a final wind up, most of the young fellows on either side of the struggle, appeared in the evening arrayed in caps and capes, carrying lighted torches. They marched to and fro, while the crowd cheered enthusiastically, as the processions with their emblems, now Republican, now Democratic, moved slowly along, headed, provided funds would permit, with a band, but if the exchequer were low, there would be a bass drum, possibly a snare drum, and on rare occasions two or three fifers. The crowd was good humored, with no hostile demonstrations

on either side, though now and then there would be a sally to enliven the martial spirit of the torch bearers.

The Freemasons had a lodge in the town, also two or three other associations were represented. One of our confreres said he had been invited to attend at a banquet to be held after a lodge meeting. I advised him to go, and meeting him a day or two there after inquired how he enjoyed it. "Banquet, indeed, banquet!" he said, "Crackers and cheese, with a dipper in a pail of water." They used to tell a tale of a delegation sent to some distant city, entailing a night on the cars. One of the party snored most outrageously, and then all at once the noise stopped. "Thank God," chimed in one of the party, "he's dead." It sounds like a homebrewed yarn, but it was handed to me as a fact.

Card playing by the town folk was not indulged in to any extent, if we shut our eyes to a little quiet game of poker now and then, though there would be an occasional rubber of whist. Bridge was unknown. But in the country, particularly at the hotels, cards were an everlasting source of amusement. It was highly amusing to see four of the crack players hammering away at a game of euchre, or high, low, jack and the game. They disdained the old fashioned plan of putting the cards down on the table as they were played, but in order to be recognized as a player of note, each card must be raised high in the air, and then slammed down on the table, accompanied with some such exclamation as "How's that for high, beat it if you can," or "Let's see you take that trick," or "That makes game, I guess, boys." Then often would follow a post mortem on the merits or demerits of a certain play.

Pinochle was also a favorite; as a general rule, these three games constituted the usual bill of fare, though the Germans would play that most difficult of games, skat, and the Norwegians indulged in whist, which differed slightly from the game as laid down by Hoyle. They were good humored and gay, as all decent Americans always are, and as they ought to

be with all the gifts nature has so lavishly showered upon them.

But for the business man, no relaxation. Tennis, not in vogue; golf, unheard of. Nothing but the national game, and that grudgingly, could lure them from their stores and counting houses. Work and hard work at that, seemed to be the summit of their ambition. Goodness, how they worked! Day in and day out it was the same thing, they boarded rather than lived at their houses, rushing home for meals, and then back again on the trot; no wonder that so many of that class were dyspeptic, thin and emaciated. They certainly did work the national cry of "Hurry up!" to the limit. Competition was rife and keen, a large proportion of the business was done on credit, very long at that. Bills were not expected to be paid until the crops were harvested, and a sharp lookout had to be kept for delinquents. Running a general store was far from a bed of roses, and it took a man of ability to weather the storm. Now and then some luckless one failed to reach the harbor, or to make port, and was no more seen.

No sitting room was complete without a marble topped table whereupon reposed a large Bible, or perchance the family album with its stony representations of the seven ages of men and women. The larger chairs and rockers were sedulously draped with antimacassers, and horsehair sofas abounded on which the children climbed and slid dolefully to the floor. The age of wax fruit and flowers had passed, and most of those ghastly productions had been consigned to the garret, save perhaps a choice circular specimen in the shape of a diminutive footstool, with a silvered glass base to imitate water, on which gracefully was arranged a bunch of water lilies. The bedrooms were frequently not exactly ornamented, but festooned, with mementoes of the dear departeds, which assumed various forms, as fancy dictated.

The cumbrous and formidable crinoline no longer held sway, but an abundance of petticoats set off the dresses to advantage. Women wore dainty beribboned little caps coquettishly perched

on their heads, and a watch generally dangled at the end of a long gold chain. The tout ensemble it must be admitted was very pleasing to the eye.

Spoonholders were a novelty I had never encountered before I had the pleasure of an introduction. It seems that they are now extinct. They seemed to be a necessary part of the table equipage, so on meeting them I meekly and humbly bowed my head, as in duty bound.

Almost invariably the hotels were run on the American plan, each guest paying so much for board and lodging. The waste was frightful, so many ordering more than was necessary, the drummers being the chief offenders in this respect. At the same time it had its advantages. Every one knew exactly what the expense was, the per diem being divided equally between breakfast, dinner, supper and lodging. Breakfast was a heavy meal in those days, meat being eaten almost universally, cereals very sparingly, and it was not complete without a crown of griddle or other cakes. Beer or wine were very seldom seen at dinner, except in the large cities.

A prodigal use of ice water. One old hotel keeper used to say to the waitresses, "Keep their glasses full of ice water, it spoils their appetites." His wife used to preside over the carving, and small indeed were the portions she doled out. After one of these Barmecidal feasts a guest remarked to him one day, "Say, Jim, it must be a source of grief to your wife that she can't serve half an egg." "You'd better tell it to her," he barked out. A dour old fellow, with a face like one of those Dutch nutcrackers; always grumbling and growling, they used to call him by way of antithesis, "Sunny Jim."

The people, generally speaking, were very abstemious. On the other hand the habit of chewing tobacco was very prevalent, with disgusting results, to which the addicts were seemingly oblivious. I have seen a man eating a peach with a quid of tobacco in his mouth! Even boys contracted the filthy habit, though it was strictly forbidden by the teachers. As in church the practise was not discontinued, the carpets suffered

in consequence. Perhaps it may be said in mitigation, that at that time chewing gum was little used, spruce gum being considered a delicacy; and of course the operation of chewing the cud, though open to the charge of vulgarity, is not accompanied with the offensiveness of the tobacco habit.

No adequate protection against fire was provided, save a hook and ladder company manned by volunteers. As the town grew, the powers in being decided that something more practical was needed, so the subject was fully ventilated and discussed. The mayor insisted that nothing short of a steam fire engine would be of any avail, but the expense both of purchase and maintenance was felt to be more than the finances of the town would permit. Various suggestions were made, some of them almost comical, and at last it was agreed that a chemical apparatus on wheels to be drawn by hand would best answer the requirements, so purchase of the same was made.

When it arrived, with an amazing exhibition of nickel plated equipment, great was the rejoicing, and the machine was hauled by volunteers manning the ropes, all over town, so that all might feast their eyes on the novel spectacle. Disappointment, however, hovered over it. One day when it was being exhibited and trotted about as a part of a parade or celebration, it was run too hastily around a corner, and to the dismay of the beholders, toppled over on its side, with decided detriment to its exterior economy. Then later, a small fire did occur, but for some reason or another the apparatus failed to operate properly, and would not quench the flames, turning out to be a dismal failure. So the squirt-gun, as the mayor had derisively christened it, fell into oblivion and was relegated to the shades of limbo.

It must be admitted that the climate was trying. It was all very well to argue that it was healthy, but a little moderation would have been very grateful, and possibly we might have foregone a part of the healthiness. It was hot enough in the summer to satisfy a salamander, and as for the winter, "Freeze

to deady" covered the ground nicely, as expressed by my German overseer.

Not infrequently we were treated to a grand pyrotechnical display in the skies. The lightning was incessant, flash after flash with scarce an intermission, vivid beyond description. Rain a perfect deluge as though poured through a sieve. Sometimes a sound like the scratching of a match, followed immediately with a peal of thunder really appalling. At times fireballs would appear on the trees or on the ground, but they seemed to be harmless. Our Anglo-Indian friends said they had never witnessed worse storms even in India. Then it would suddenly clear off, and nature would smile again as if nothing unusual had happened. As a matter of fact, casualties from lightning were not in proportion to what seemed to be an outpouring of the vials of heaven.

The buffalo massacre was at its height, and bales of hides were the result. They came in such profusion that the price was almost nominal, and buffalo robes formed a part of every liveryman's outfit in the cooler regions. Made into coats the wearer of one could defy the blasts of Boreas, and when furnished with a high beaver collar, and mind you, some one else to drive, sleighing was robbed of its terrors, and joy supervened. Men often wore detachable fur collars in addition to their overcoats, and mighty comfortable they were to say nothing of protection against frostbitten ears.

One winter I wore a brown velveteen coat, and a sealskin waistcoat. The coat created quite a sensation, and numerous were the inquiries as to the cost thereof. The waistcoat was a still greater wonder, and a farmer after seeing it, said he had a buffalo hide and he would have a waistcoat of the kind too. Buffalo skins made splendid overcoats, defying even the most vigorous attacks of winter. Some of the English appeared at a large party in dress suits, and great was the astonishment at the appearance of such a costume. Knickerbockers were an innovation, and one old lady was heard to remark that they were positively indecent.

At one time it was thought that soft coal might be found in the vicinity. The State geologists pointed out that we were far north of the coal belt; notwithstanding, several borings were made, but they only confirmed the opinion, as the sole product was a shale which could not be used for fuel.

Newspapers, speaking at large, were more inclined to sensationalism than to reliability, except in the larger cities, and even they were given to exaggeration. As a rule, the country papers were well edited, far ahead of their contemporaries in England, so far as the reading matter was concerned, but the advertisements in many cases were highly objectionable, and in some cases disgraceful. The tone of the large city papers improved as time went on, but much was open to criticism.

Many of the school text books were very poor, the readers so denominated, being filled with fabulous tales of revolutionary times and heroes, modeled on the cherry tree episode, with other stories of equal credibility. There was one which was perfectly delightful. In it was described, with an attendant woodcut, how half a dozen farmers armed with pitchforks and scythes, put to flight a whole troop of British cavalry. The books on arithmetic, geography and the sciences were well written, but some of those on history utterly unreliable.

Dime novels were in great demand by the boys, though in many houses taboo, when resort was had to the barn, or to some secret cave, where they could be devoured wholesale. The tales were wild and lurid, the cheapest kind of rot, but it must be conceded that they were seldom indecent. They were the worst kind of rubbish.

The magazines afforded the best reading, many of a high order, largely filled with yarns of the civil war, until the public wearied of the subject.

Labor, especially unskilled, was not equal to the demand, the railroads having great difficulty in obtaining sufficient to carry on the building of new lines, which were urgently demanded. Wages averaged two and a half to three dollars a day for carpenters, and others in proportion. Speaking of car-

penters brings up an incident which might have culminated in an accident in the building of a new house in the town. One of them while at work on a cornice felt the scaffolding giving way under his feet. He let out a yell and managed to catch hold of a projection with his teeth, and hung on until the foreman came to his aid and pulled him onto the roof by the hair of his head. "By Yiminy, that was a close shave," Ole spluttered, shaking hands with his rescuer.

Poverty, such as was seen on the other side of the water, was unknown. There was work for every one, and in place of the man seeking a job the job sought the man. Hand labor was the order of the day, and the man did a fair day's work for a fair day's wage. Very few women were employed in offices, I remember but one, and she was certainly efficient.

CHAPTER VIII

RAILROADS

Throughout the country accidents to passenger trains were too frequent to be pleasant, but it must be remembered that the lines in the west were single track, and it was difficult to procure men for passenger service who were fully alive to the responsibilities of their calling. Carelessness has always been one of the failings common to this country. Discipline was lax, the manner in which baggage was handled was simply disgraceful. The most distressing part of an accident was, that the coaches being heated with stoves, a fire, in case of an accident, was frequently accompanied with horrible results.

The freight service was quite unlike the passenger, and totally different conditions prevailed. It was not difficult to get recruits for it, as the glamor, the risk, and the opportunities for promotion appealed to the adventurous youth, and there were generally more applicants than positions. But it was a life replete with peril, the list of casualties was appalling, still the trains had to be manned, regardless of the consequences. Take them all in all, the freight brakemen were a fine set of fellows, and there was wonderful esprit de corps among them. The record of nerve, endurance and hardships through which they went is the token of their loyalty.

The freight cars were coupled with links and pins, necessitating an entrance between two cars to raise the link and drop the pin. It was bad enough in broad daylight and fine weather, but at night, with snow flying and an ice-laden wind cutting your face, it was a nerve racking job to step in between two cars, one of them moving, and make the coupling, by the feeble light of a lantern filled with oil. Then there was the ever present injury or possible death trap in the angles of the

switches, and multitudes of poor fellows can testify to the horrible agony of finding a foot caught in the bootjack of a switch, unable to pull it out, waiting for the oncoming train of cars to crush his foot to pulp. Or, if a deadwood, as the projecting timbers to keep the cars apart were called, happened to be rotten, or a coupling bar gave way under the impact, the brakeman was the sufferer, and the penalty was extreme.

Whenever the whistle sounded for brakes the crew had to mount the cars, traveling along the running boards, to apply the brakes by hand. Sticks were not permitted to be used as levers to turn the brake wheels, because the brakes would be liable to be set so hard as to make the wheels slide on the rails, thus making them flat wheeled. Also a train can be stopped quicker if the wheels are not allowed to slide. It will readily be seen that in winter when these running boards were coated with ice and sleet, how the dangers were greatly magnified. The men were not permitted to wear spiked shoes. When the train was running the rear brakeman rode in the caboose, the front brakeman on the engine. Still, they were a happy-go-lucky lot, never talked anything but shop, and entertained a secret contempt for the passenger brakeman, who usually went by the name of "softy." What did he know about coupling cars in a blizzard, or the dangers of the bootjack or the running board?

There was no mistaking a railroad man, his very walk betrayed him. With an undefinable glint that permeated his whole being, he stood apart from the vulgar crowd, surrounded by an atmosphere of his own. He was never known to refer to the time as a quarter or half past four, but it was 4.15 or 4.30, and he gazed at you with ineffable contempt should you venture to use such unprofessional terms. His language was of the railroad railroady, and seldom did it extend beyond No. 19 or other number, hitting her up, blowing out a cylinder head, or slipping an eccentric. But he was loyal to the company, speaking of the president as the "old

man," with affection. While the engineer, fireman and conductor had their uses, he the brakeman was "it."

Still it was not by any means all plain sailing for the conductors and engine men, or as they used to say, it was not all beer and skittles. Bucking snow was the inevitable concomitant of the winter. There were some snow ploughs, but they were generally reserved for the obstructions that appeared on the main line. The usual plan was to take a heavy freight engine, or sometimes two coupled together, and rush them at a snow bank full tilt. It was a hard, much hated job. Sometimes the engine emerged triumphant and the track was cleared by the first impact, but that was by no means the general rule. It usually took several attacks before the snow would give way and acknowledge defeat; now and then an engine got stuck and could not be backed out, when it was a matter of considerable difficulty to prevent the pumps from freezing and the engine going dead. Frost proof injectors had not been invented.

Then the real trouble began. They might be miles from a station, and if there was but one engine someone had to walk back to the nearest point to wire for help. In the meantime the whole crew would huddle into the caboose, which was always taken along, plentifully supplied with wood. Bucking snow was very hard on the locomotives, many were the cripples that had to be sent to the shops, occasionally in such numbers that the service was seriously interfered with, and perhaps engines hired from another road. Snow fences were generally erected at the deep cuts, but it did not take long to fill a good sized cut when the wind was blowing a gale. I was told of a cut a few miles out which was 18 feet deep, filled with snow that had to be shovelled out by hand with the use of several platforms, and a most heart-breaking job they said it was. They claimed it was 28 feet deep, but I forbear. It was a growing country. Needless to say that passenger trains were now and then caught in the snow, the passengers being marooned until relief was sent.

Though snow and blizzards preempted the winter, the summer did a good job in the way of a cloud-burst or two, with landslides as an accompaniment; possibly a derailment varied the programme. Then a hurried call for the wrecking crew, followed by the arrival of a steam shovel, with chains, cables, and a large variety of tools. Or a bridge or a culvert might be washed away, and in an astonishingly short time a temporary one was built, and the trains were running again.

Horses, cattle, sheep, sometimes a stray deer, managed to get on the track ahead of the engine, but pigs were the especial bane of the engineer. The smaller the animal the greater the danger. If they got hit, and they were slow to move, they would grease the rails, when a derailment is apt to follow, a fact well known, and grease was not infrequently employed in cases of strikes or other disturbances. On one occasion an action was brought for the slaughter of a number of porkers; the brakemen all testified that everything possible was done to try and stop the train, but in vain, and the engineer stated, almost with tears in his eyes, that he couldn't help hitting the poor things. That evening the crew were gathered in the lobby of the railroad hotel. I was talking with the manager and overheard, "Oh, boys, when I seen them miserable pigs ahead of me I was scared to death for fear they'd grease the track and ditch the train. So I gave her a full head, and you should have seen them shoats fly up into the air, it fairly rained pigs; it was the only chance we had."

In those days the railroads had it pretty much their own way, and it must be admitted that they did not neglect to improve the opportunity. There was no Interstate Commerce Commission to interfere, rates were arbitrary, generally based on all that the traffic would bear, and the dear public paid the bill, muttering, seldom appealing to the traffic manager, for the invariable answer was, "We have to protect other industries in adjacent localities," and if the tongue was twisted in the cheek, it was not in the presence of the complainant.

But when the Granger movement started, and sought to in-

culcate the idea that the roads were not altogether private property, but that the public had some interest therein, scorn and derision in profusion were heaped upon the instigators. The railroads not supreme? Whoever heard of such an idea? If they were not the owners of their own property, who were? Had they not paid for it with their own money, and had the public unless they were stockholders, any rights in the management of the road? So the idea set up by the grangers was flouted on all sides. But there was a cataclysm, there came a day of reckoning. When the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the contentions of the grangers, and decided that the railroads were not altogether private property, but were subject to control, then there was a complete change of front and a general rush to cover, which need not be entered into here.

All the States had abolished the laws of champerty and maintenance, and the results of such action are obvious.

When an accident happened the companies generally settled the meritorious cases, so there was not so much litigation over them in the courts. But later on the ambulance chaser arrived on the scene, and we all know what has happened therefrom. The first Railroad Commission was established in Iowa in 1878.

Turning now to ecclesiastical matters, priority to which ought to have been given instead of to mundane affairs, there was a fair number of Episcopalians, and for some time the women had been busy collecting donations for a prospective church. At last, in 1875 the happy day arrived, when after consultation and due examination of the fund, it was announced that there was sufficient cash, with the aid of a mortgage, available to erect a building. They already had a lot in a good locality, and in course of time a very pretty church was erected thereon. Then it had to be furnished, and in a short time, by dint of entertainments and the like, and much exercise of the art of extracting donations, the church was completed.

The first rector was the Rev. H. T., and if ever a man deserved a crown of glory he was the one. He came from New York State, the kindliest and most gentle soul that ever donned a surplice. I can see him now, with his winning smile and quiet voice, but he had courage and perseverance in no ordinary degree. He worked like a beaver, and it was mainly by his exertions that the church was built. His wife was a great favorite, she was just like a little bird. Ever cheerful, but with a simple dignity which well became her. The reverend met me one day with a quaint smile on his face, evidently something out of the ordinary had taken place. He elucidated matters by saying he had noticed that one of the members and his wife had not attended church lately, and he had called upon them. "Well," explained the truant, "we are very fond of the church and of you, but we thought we would take a little rest."

When I was senior warden, I shall never forget one Christmas Eve service when after the prayers we were expecting a sermon, he glided down the aisle, stopped in front of my pew, and begged me to make a few remarks to the congregation, which consisted not only of children but was packed with insiders and outsiders. I pleaded want of notice, he countered with an earnest request. Unwilling to refuse, I had to go through the ordeal.

Every one liked him, he won the respect and admiration of all. Unfortunately, his health began to fail, the climate was too rigorous, and to our great regret he had to resign. He went back to New York State, from there we heard from him occasionally, but his letters ceased, and we heard that the end had come.

The windows in the church were all of stained glass. The effect was very pleasing, as they diffused a soft light, which as the darky janitor explained, was quite ecstatical. He meant ecclesiastical.

Before the church was built, when we had no rector, we used to have services in the Court House, kindly tendered to

us for that purpose. Generally, I was the one who read the service, and by way of a sermon used to read a chapter from some book of religious essays. One of the congregation said to my wife, "What a splendid sermon your husband preached today." She chuckled, and revealed the mystery.

A memorable occasion it was when the Bishop of Iowa arrived to hold a confirmation service in the little church. He was a tall, handsome, well put together gentleman, and looked as if he could render a good account of himself, should necessity arise. After the service he was entertained by our Australian friend at dinner. A large sirloin of beef graced one end of the table. "Ah," said the bishop, "that reminds me of the Roast Beef of Old England, which I heard played when I was dining at an officers' mess at Aldershot." Then he added, "When I was at Lambeth Palace they used to call me, my lord, but over here they say 'How are you, Bish?' I wonder what the Bishop of London would say if someone slapped him on the back and called him Bish." I ventured to remark that Gouverneur Morris for a wager, slapped President Washington on the back. "Yes, so the story goes," said he, "but he received such a look as almost froze him on the spot."

At the same time, the event is open to serious doubt. It is true that Morris had a hobby on the subject of equality of men, and was in the habit of parading it. But it is to be remembered that this same Morris was a gentleman born, and it seems highly improbable that he would so far forget what was due to the President and his office. On the other hand, it is said that the outrage was the subject of a bet, and it is possible that the parties were unduly excited, for it is hard to believe that such a gross impertinence, if not worse, could have been perpetrated by Gouveneur Morris sober.

CHAPTER IX

THE FARM

When we were on the farm we made the acquaintance of a delightful couple who lived in Boston, but generally made an annual pilgrimage to their place two or three miles from us. He was an elderly gentleman, a master devotee to gardening, constantly engaged in trying experiments in the way of introducing novelties, or at least such as were not in the schedule as known roundabout. He told me he had labored hard with gooseberries for years, and had sent to England for bushes, but all to no avail, also he had tried them in his garden at the farm, but with no result. Sea kale was another hobby which tried him sorely, it was no go out there. Peach trees were also essayed, but though he obtained the hardiest varieties, no fruit was ever forthcoming. She was equally fond of flowers, but did not venture into deep water. She contented herself with what was sure to grow, and she had a charming garden in due season.

Among other things he had three elk, which were supposed to be confined by a very high fence, but they, like school boys, constantly broke bonds, until at last he was compelled to sign their death warrant. He sent us a haunch from one of them, but though it was hung as long as caution would permit, it proved so tough that we could not tackle it, even though we wasted a goodly lot of currant jelly on it. He had some good Jersey cows, but they did not seem to do well, the climate was too much for their aristocratic blood.

Their little estate had its own natural beauty, well timbered, with a stream of clear water running through it; a cottage with a large screened porch, altogether a most attractive retreat.

The shooting was very good. Prairie chickens were abundant, and while a dog was a great help, a man could go out and nearly always pick up enough, especially in the stubble, to satisfy a sportsman. Then in the woods what were called partridges could be found; they were a species of grouse, and their drumming could be heard for a long distance. Along on the bottom lands ducks of many kinds, brown, redheads, greenheads and others, but canvasbacks did not appear; that is, the true strain, though there was a bird that had some of the characteristics of the real king of ducks. A few teal and widgeon now and then would break cover, I shot the only woodcock I ever saw. Snipe could be found in the marshes, quail were very plentiful. There were three bevies that used to come close to the house, they were of course immune.

For a few years, wild pigeons would come in countless numbers, weighting down the branches of the trees. Men used to go out at night and knock them down with sticks. All of a sudden they disappeared, and no one knows what became of them, though their disappearance has been a subject of much inquiry, and all kinds of reasons have been given for it, none of which were satisfactory. They were excellent eating, always in good condition. We used to find acorns in their crops, but no complaints were made that they attacked the crops. Had they done so, the loss would have been tremendous, as coming as they did in such myriads, they would have made a clean sweep of everything.

On the subject of shooting, a rather quaint experience befell me. One of our number professed to be a great lover of the sport, so I told him that if he liked to come out to the farm, I thought we could pick up a few prairie chickens round the grain stacks. Out he came one evening, and the next morning we started for the stubble. I didn't like the manner in which he handled his gun, and so I told him. He said he always carried it full cock, as one never knew what might turn up. I was far from satisfied, as once or twice when he turned round I found myself gazing into the muzzle of the weapon.

Carefully and circumspectly did I look after him, taking mighty good concern to keep behind him at all times. He was a very indifferent shot, but by blazing into the brown of them, he managed to bag a few birds. After a while, as we were walking along I heard a tremendous bang. "What's that?" I asked. "Oh," he said, my gun went off, I must have touched the trigger by mistake." "Let me see your gun," he handed it to me, and I promptly fired off the other barrel. "Now we will go back as fast as our legs will take us, or you will be shooting more than you can carry." He expostulated, but I was adamant. I gave him the birds, and packed him off that afternoon.

One evening we had an unceremonious visit from a gentleman who wore a fine fur coat, striped, black and white, of the polecat variety. He ensconced himself under the porch, and the dog finding him out, proceeded to try and oust him. Then arose a terrifying odor, and the question presented itself as to how the occupancy could be terminated. A Norwegian farmer passed at the time in a wagon, and after a short examination of the premises, remarked "Yah, he stink varra," climbed into his wagon and drove off. Finally, after tying up the dog, the gentleman vacated, but it was several days before the porch was habitable.

Rattlesnakes now and then disported themselves among the rocks, one being killed outside our front door, just before my wife came up. A little son of one of our tribe was bitten by one, as he was attempting to pull it out of a hole in which it had taken refuge. Whisky in copious quantities was always supposed to be an antidote, but as there was none on hand, the boy's father bound up the wound with a poultice made of thick mud, and though the child felt some ill effects from the poison, he soon recovered altogether. While poison is in the air, it is said that there is no poison ivy in Iowa.

The father had bought a farm, but was not accumulating wealth to any alarming amount. It happened that there was a living in the family, and as there didn't seem to be one here,

he went home and took it up. He entered the church through the back door at Durham.

Having occasion to visit a farm about a mile away, I had one of the team hitched single to a light buggy. I had not driven her that way before, and a slight difference of opinion resulted. Things went smoothly for about half a mile, when the mare suddenly stopped, nothing could persuade her to move on; the road was clear, but she wouldn't budge an inch. I got out and petted her, looked things over to see if any of the harness chafed, nothing of the kind. Then I tried a little punishment, no avail. Suddenly the truth flashed across me, —a clear case of balk. I unharnessed her, hitched her to a fence, hid the harness, and drew the buggy to one side. Then a good strong halter came into use, with which she was securely hitched to a fence post, and there I left her until the following afternoon. When she saw me she whinnied. Promptly was she harnessed and put between the shafts. Off she started meek as a lamb, and nevermore did my lady give vent to any such tantrum.

I had gotten the idea some years before in the hunting field, where a similar performance and cure were narrated. In that same hunt, by the way, was a middle aged Frenchman with a fine estate and passionately fond of the sport. He was a splendid fellow, but he rode like a sailor. At a meet one day, soliloquizing about the horse he was riding, he said, "Yes, he very nice horse, I like him much. Ven he jomp easy, I am, but ven he jomp roff I do not remain." His quaint sayings would fill a book. He was a tremendous favorite, his house always full of guests.

Of course we had a large dog on the farm, he was a fine handsome fellow, with a lovely coat. But he fell from grace and came to an untimely end. The flock of sheep began to minish all of a sudden, but with an uncanny frequency. It was thought to be the depredation of timber wolves, which were seen now and then round the place. So a watch was kept, and Master Rover was caught redhanded, or rather red-

mouthed. There is but one cure for a sheepkilling dog, and that remedy had to be applied. We gave the rascal a decent burial, which was more than he deserved. The sheepkilling mania will sometimes develop in a dog after years of being with and taking care of them, at least so I was told by an old Scotch shepherd.

In 1872 we gave a large Christmas party at our house. The unmarried guests were forewarned that there were not sufficient bedrooms to accommodate them, and if they wished to stay all night, they would have to bring robes or blankets, and be content with a shake-down in the sitting room in which there was a large fireplace. So they arrived, some twenty-five in number, according to a photograph taken at the front door, including the faithful Ellen, holding the baby high in air, so it should not be lost in the shuffle. The dinner was pronounced a grand success, the plum pudding and the mince pies were voted a triumph of the culinary art. Ellen was no fool of a cook, and she surpassed and did herself proud on that occasion. Dancing prevailed until well into the morning, when the married folk occupied their bedrooms, the bachelors rolling themselves up in furs, blankets and rugs, sleeping as best they might, while the fire was replenished with cordwood, so that the room, with the aid of the furnace, was a veritable hothouse. It was pretty chilly outside, with the thermometer registering many degrees below zero. Next morning, asking one of them how they slept, "Oh, it was fine, we slept in our skins," was the enthusiastic reply.

The next year we moved into town, building a frame house on the outskirts, and as we had plenty of leisure, we could drive about and see our friends both in the town and in the country. One day my wife came home in great glee. She had taken the morning train, and in some way the coach got derailed, though the engine remained on the track. She was in a hurry, and the engineer asked her if she would ride on the locomotive. Of course she would, who wouldn't? It was an event in her lifetime, and she grasped the opportunity. So up

she climbed into the engine, the fireman giving her his seat, and she arrived at her destination on time, or nearly so.

I remember once going east, that I rode on the engine from Sarnia to Buffalo, as I took a route through Canada. That was also an event in my lifetime, at least I thought so then. It was at a time when air brakes were being exploited, but before they were perfected. On this engine was a steam pipe connected to the boiler, and also to the brake cylinders, with rods which actuated the brakes. There was a valve in the steam pipe, and when it was opened the force of the escaping steam made a vacuum in the pipe and in the cylinders, so that the brakes were applied by the pressure on the rods. It seemed to work quite satisfactorily, but of course was not equal to the system of the present day, then in its infancy. We travelled pretty fast, and on rounding the curves it looked as though the engine must leave the tracks. Standing with one foot on the footboard of the engine and the other on the tender, the sensation was as if one foot was galloping and the other trotting.

Americans are not by nature a doggy people; that is, they do not take to dogs seriously, as other nations do, bring out their best qualities, and make friends and companions of them. It is really quite an art to train a dog properly, but it is well worth the time and trouble. We always had dogs when it was possible, and the children made much of them, training them in the ways in which they should go.

Among their other pets was a canary, so tame that it would fly about the room and perch on their shoulders, but one day it was found dead in its cage. An inquest was held by the youngsters, and a verdict returned that the bird died of starvation, and strongly censured whomever was responsible. It seemed that someone, I am not sure that I was not the culprit, when filling the bottle with seed did not return it to its proper place, so the unfortunate bird could not reach it. Grief was apparent, but it was mitigated by the suggestion that here was an opportunity for a grand funeral. The same was planned

and carried out with touching effect. It seems to me that part of the burial service was read. The pageant was so attractive that the next day the body was exhumed, and a similar performance with even more elaborate trimmings was staged. The next day it was decided that Dick had not been properly entombed, so there was another exhumation. This time nothing was omitted, and the bird was put in a box with some flowers, and finally interred. It was then discovered that the feathers were soiled, and the corp, as the Scotch call it, was in an unhealthy condition, so the poor thing was at last allowed to rest in peace, a little wooden cross commemorating its demise and marking the place of sepulture.

But when the little dog Gyp passed away, grief was still more intense, and a funeral was projected on a far grander scale. This time we insisted that all the sorrow should be merged in one obsequy, and that the resting place should be a finality, not to be desecrated by any aftermath, no matter how urgent might be the appeal to the sympathies of the bereaved. So some of the neighboring children were invited to attend the solemn event. The remains were enclosed in a wooden box, which had formerly contained dried peaches, so there was an odor of sanctity about it; it was carefully nailed down, but before doing so, a piece of cardboard, giving the name, and the date of departure, was laid on the body, among the flowers. Then to the chanting of a hymn, the words being written for the occasion, the remains were deposited in a grave near a rosebush, which thereafter was known as Gyp's rosebush.

On the summer of 1878 the children were taken to Ireland by their mother, and among other things attended the services at Armagh cathedral. They were by nature of a religious turn of mind, and the chanting and singing, together with the beauty of the building made a deep and lasting impression upon them. This in due time blossomed and bore fruit in an entirely unexpected manner. On their return their favorite pastime was to put on their nighties to represent surplices, if

a black scarf could be obtained, so much the better, and they would go through the whole Episcopal service from "When the wicked man" down to the end of the Litany, which they chanted as they had heard it in the cathedral. They sang the psalms with vehemence, hymns to the tunes they were accustomed to. The Te Deum was rendered as the spirit moved them, being an especial favorite, and nothing was omitted. They were really in dead earnest, it was most touching to hear the refrain of their little voices, as we were sitting downstairs. Never was the subject alluded to in any way to them.

Then again, they were great on secular singing. Pinafore was as child's play to them, at least they thought so as they seemed to know it by heart; and when their mother wrote a little play for them, they studied their parts assiduously, helped to make the dresses, and collected the properties. The performance went off with great éclat and was frequently produced for the benefit of our friends.

Then in 1879 business called me to St. Paul, Minnesota, so our career in Decorah came to an end.

Now that we are advanced in years, these scenes constantly present themselves to our minds. We are the sole survivors, save two, of the original colony. Never do we forget the kindly welcome that we received, and the host of friends that we made. Though nearly all have passed out of life, they still appear before us, as in a dream, as we muse together over the past.

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